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THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF JAMES HENLEY THORNWELL

by

Paul Leslie Garber

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in
the Graduate School of
Arts and Sciences
of
Duke University

1939

G. R. R.

Ph.D.

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Preface



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Preface

Since the beginning of the present century, many significant critical studies of the economic, social and political aspects of the civilization of the Old South have been made. Thus far, however, relatively little similar research has been undertaken in the field of religion. Yet, admittedly, religion was one of the most prominent features of that civilization.

One of the central figures of religious life in the ante-bellum South was James Henley Thornwell. He probably did more than any other person to formulate the distinctive religious concepts and attitudes of his section. And yet no critical investigation has been made of the sources and characteristic emphases of his ethical and religious thought. This study is a contribution in this direction. It seeks to determine the principal concepts in his philosophy, ethical theory, theology, ecclesiology, social and political philosophy. It also attempts to indicate the way in which Thornwell endeavored essentially to integrate the whole of his thought.

For their friendly interest in and untiring guidance of this research, I am indebted to Professor H. Shelton Smith, supervisor

of my studies, and to Professor Alban G. Widgery, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Duke University. For their encouragement in bringing the present work to this conclusion and for many tokens of their affection, I wish to mention my parents, Dr. and Mrs. John A. Garber. It was the generosity of Mr. Gurney Harriss Kearns in endowing the Kearns Fellowship in American Religious Thought which has made this study possible. For his kindly personal interest, I am his debtor.

Ready access to important materials in connection with this study has been given me by officials in the libraries of Duke University; the University of North Carolina; the University of South Carolina; the Library of Congress; the Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey; Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia; the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, North Carolina; and the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. To all of them, I am deeply grateful.

I express my gratitude also to Miss Belle Glover Thornwell, great-great-granddaughter of Dr. Thornwell, to different members of that family, and to others who, in one way or another, have indicated to me their interest in the subject of this dissertation.

For personal kindnesses, less directly but just as really related to this study, I am sincerely grateful to the following: Dr. David H. Scanlon; Rev. John H. Marion, Jr., and the staff of the First Presbyterian Church, Durham; Rev. Donald H. Stewart and

Mr. F. K. Elder of the Presbyterian Church, Chapel Hill; and Dr. and Mrs. Clement Vollmer of Duke University.

I am indebted to Miss Margeret Jones for her assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

P. L. G.

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Chapter I

Introduction: James Henley Thornwell and His Place in Southern History

- I. A Biographical Sketch
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Chapter I

I. A Biographical Sketch

James Henley Thornwell was born on December 9, 1812 on a plantation in Marlborough District, South Carolina, the second¹ of four children in the family who grew to maturity. His father was the plantation's over-seer and manager, of English ancestry, a man who, although he had poorly fortified his family against the exigency of his death, provided well for them during his lifetime. His mother came from well-known South Carolina Welch Baptist stock. Her hardiness during years of privation and the staunchness of her Calvinistic faith had an untold influence on James, her first born son. His home for the first eight years of his life, although not pretentious,

1

Materials for Thornwell's biography are largely incorporated in B. M. Palmer's The Life and Letters of J. H. Thornwell, D. D., LL. D., 1875. Palmer's associations with and admiration for Thornwell render his interpretations liable to some suspicion. The data he presented is of such a scope, however, to make an extensive biographical treatment unnecessary as a part of the present study.

was definitely cultural in character.

After the father's death, December 30, 1820, the family was thrown upon the mercies of friends and relatives for a subsistence. About this time, James received his first formal education in an "old field" school under a first rate classical scholar, Peter McIntyre.² Through his teacher's interest in young Thornwell's intellectual precocity, two wealthy residents of the neighborhood, General James Gillespie, an elderly planter, and William H. Robbins, a promising young lawyer of Cheraw, agreed to finance the boy's further education. For a period Robbins himself was Thornwell's tutor. Later he was sent to a private academy in Cheraw to complete his preparation for college.

In January 1830, he entered the junior class at South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina). His collegiate training was classical in nature consisting almost entirely of courses in Greek and Roman literature and the rudiments of philosophy. He obtained the reputation of being the college's outstanding student debater. Graduating with first honors in his class in December 1831, he delivered the Latin salutatory address during the commencement exercises.

The subsidization of his education having been discontinued, Thornwell remained for a while at the college attempting an unprofitable experiment in tutoring. He wished to continue

his studies in the classics. In the summer of 1832 he was appointed principal of the Cheraw academy. He remained in this position two years. It was during this period that Thornwell, by confession of faith, joined the Presbyterian church. The available materials are not adequate for a coherent account of his religious development. At thirteen years of age he defended his mother's Calvinism against a kinsman's Methodist Arminianism. When he was seventeen years old, he determined that the way for him "to glorify God" was by following the profession of a theologian. During his college years his fellow students viewed his talents as pointing to the profession of law, which his benefactors, Gillespie and Robbins, had urged upon him. During the same period he himself expressed a desire to make a name for himself as a man of letters with no other profession. His decision to enter the Presbyterian ministry evidently was made simultaneously with his affiliation with that church. Accounts differ as to how Thornwell's attention was drawn to the Westminster Confession of Faith, but that he was led to the Presbyterian church by his study of it seems undoubted.³

On December 2, 1833, the Presbytery of Harmony received Thornwell as a candidate for the ministry. The following sum-

³
B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 80-81; see also pp. 25, 47, 84, 93-94, 101. J. Marion Sims, The Story of My Life, p. 107.

mer, with a scholarship, he went to Andover, Massachusetts, to begin his seminary education. Finding the professor of languages there ill, the New School theology irritating and the people of Andover unfriendly, after a brief stay, he removed to Harvard. For six weeks he studied there privately in Divinity Hall. Then ill health forced him to return to South Carolina. He planned to enter the senior class in the theological seminary at Columbia. But as this was a period in which the need for ministers was urgent, within a month after his return, he was licensed by his Presbytery and, in the spring of 1835, was ordained and installed as pastor of a newly organized church at Lancaster. He ministered to this parish for almost three years and began to take his place in the courts of the church. In December 1835, he married the sister of his class-mate James H. Witherspoon, Nancy White Witherspoon. She was a grandniece of John Witherspoon, Presbyterian minister and president of Princeton college, the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence.

In January 1838, Thornwell began his duties as a professor at South Carolina College, an institution with which he was to be associated, with but two short pastoral intervals, for eighteen years. For two years he was professor of rhetoric and belles lettres. From 1841 to 1851 he was professor of Sacred Literature and Evidences of Christianity and chaplain. In 1852 he was made president of the college, and he held this position until 1856. From 1856 to his death in 1862, Thornwell was professor of systematic theology at the theological

seminary in Columbia.

Two of his colleagues on the faculty at the college later attained national reputations. Francis Lieber, the political scientist, was on familiar terms with Thornwell until 1855 when, as he felt, Thornwell's religious bigotry defeated his election to the college's presidency. Joseph LeConte, one of South Carolina's famous men of science, recorded in his autobiography that Thornwell was one of those whose society stimulated his intellectual activity during his residence at the college.⁴

The notable scope of Thornwell's accomplishments within the brief fifty years of his lifetime is significant. The rather startling fashion in which his boyhood ambitions were fulfilled is also of biographical interest. He himself confessed that from his earliest self-reflection, the ambition to be a man of learning had worked like a passion within him. After a dinner-party in New York in 1856, Professor George Bancroft of Harvard presented Thornwell with a fine copy of Aristotle's works on the fly-leaf of which he had inscribed in Latin, "A testimonial of regard to the Rev. Dr. J. H. Thornwell, the most learned of the learned."⁵ His ambition during his college days was that he

⁴ William D. Armes, ed., The Autobiography of Joseph LeConte, p. 172. T. S. Perry, Life and Letters of Francis Lieber, pp. 105, 285, 294. See also V. L. Parrington, The Romantic Revolution in America, p. 93.

⁵ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 537, 20.

should be a man of letters who should not die unsung like a beast in the field. He left the world of scholarly research four large volumes of his writings and another of his letters.⁶ His ambition at the age of seventeen was to be a theologian. This ambition defined itself in 1834 at Harvard. "I wish to establish a literary character in my native state: for I have an eye on a Professorship in the Theological Seminary at Columbia."⁷ When he died, it was to his influence that this institution owed its national renown more than to the influence of any other one man.⁸

II. The Channels through which Thornwell's Thought was Influential

Thornwell's religious thought was most immediately influential through his preaching. Although on his journeys to various points in the United States as a commissioner to the General Assemblies, and on repeated trips through the South and Southwest, he preached to large congregations, he was not a preacher

⁶ J. B. Adger and J. L. Girardeau, eds., The Collected Writings of J. H. Thornwell, D. D., LL. D., 1871-1873. 4 vols. Cited hereafter as Collected Writings. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 94.

⁷ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 120, 47.

⁸ William Childs Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, p. 37.

for the masses. His language was too academic and his arguments were too closely knit in Aristotelian logic for that to have been true. He wrestled with problems and as the conflict grew in intensity, so did his enthusiasm. In one instance when he was preaching in Charleston on the Last Judgment, it is recorded that "the whole congregation appeared terror-stricken and unconsciously seized the backs of the pews, as when Jonathan Edwards preached his memorable sermon on 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.'" A young man present on the occasion testified that "never was he so frightened in all his life."⁹

Dr. Addison Alexander, prominent minister of New York City, said of one of Thornwell's General Assembly sermons that it was "as fine a specimen of Demosthenian eloquence as he had ever heard from the pulpit, and that it realized his idea of what preaching should be."¹⁰

John C. Calhoun in 1843 compared Thornwell to his teacher at Yale, Timothy Dwight, and commented on Thornwell's thorough acquaintance with topics generally familiar only to statesmen. After having heard Thornwell at South Carolina College in 1847, Daniel Webster is reported to have said: "Greatest pulpit orator I have ever heard." As a preacher, though not as a theologian, he was to the South of his day what Albert W. Barnes was to the Presbyterian North of that day and what Harry Emerson Fosdick is to our time.

9

Thomas H. Law in the Centennial Addresses, 1912, p. 16.

10

B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 417.

Thornwell had wide influence through his participation in the life and thought of the Presbyterian church. He attended his first Synod in 1836 just at the time when the schism between the Old School and New School parties was beginning to manifest itself as irrepressible. He attended the General Assembly for the first time in 1837 when that schism was consummated. By the time of his next Assembly, in 1845, his reputation had been made by his writings. From then until his death he was named by his Presbytery a commissioner to almost half of the Assemblies held during his lifetime. In 1847, then only thirty-four years of age, he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly, the youngest man ever before or since to hold that high office. In all of the Assemblies he attended after 1845, he was a prominent figure, being named to important committees and commissions and being invited on several occasions to preach before that national body. All of the southern Presbyterians and many of the northern members of that church probably would have agreed with Henry Ward Beecher's comment: "By common fame, Dr. Thornwell was the most brilliant minister in the Old School Presbyterian Church, and the most brilliant debater in the General Assembly. This reputation he early gained and never lost. Whenever he was present in the Assembly, he was always the first person pointed out to a stranger."

11

Although he confessed to Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge, his

osophies. Many of these were in the form of book reviews. Others concerned current topics of debate in church circles. Some of the later ones had important political implications. Some were sermons. Excerpts from some of these articles were republished by a number of the religious weekly newspapers in the South.

The Southern Quarterly Review was established in 1842 under the editorship of William Gilmore Simms. During the 1850's, through Simms' friendship with the Virginia tory, Beverley Tucker, the journal acquired a political reputation. In 1856, when financially the magazine was ready to collapse, Thornwell assumed its editorship. He issued three numbers, April and August, 1856, and February, 1857, before, through lack of patronage, the publication came to its undeserved end. In those three issues Thornwell had five articles, -- a review-essay on American higher education, an essay in memory of his own philosophy professor, Robert Henry, an essay on Plato's philosophy, a review-essay on miracles, and a series of brief reviews.

During his lifetime Thornwell published certain of his critical articles and sermons in book form. The one on the validity of the Apocrypha, 1844, was his part of a series of articles exchanged with a Roman Catholic priest of Charleston on that subject.¹⁴ The other, Discourses on Truth, 1855, was a series

J. H. Thornwell, The Arguments of Romanists from the Infallibility of the Church and the Testimony of the Fathers in behalf of the Apocrypha Discussed and Refuted, New York: Leavitt, Trow and Company, 1845.

of sermons which he preached at the college chapel.

It was one of Thornwell's youthful dreams to do something concerning what he considered the then deplorable state of Southern literature. In 1836 his Synod had made him one of a committee to investigate the possibilities of establishing a southern theological review. In his work noted above he did his share toward fulfilling these dreams, and thereby widened immeasurably the circle of influence for his own thought.

Not much is known concerning his activities in secular politics. Nevertheless the University of South Carolina's historian classed him as one of the best politicians of his time. He himself admitted consulting with the Governor during the slave-trade controversy in the mid-1850's. About the same time, he used his influence to the State's advantage in the struggle for public schools. He was twice pastor of the Presbyterian church in the State's capitol.¹⁶ The influence of some social aspects of his religious thought through this channel is worthy of note.

There are three institutions in the policies of which Thornwell implanted his thought. The University of South Carolina honors the name of Thornwell with one of her freshman scholarships and with one of her dormitories. In so far as this uni-

15

_____, Discourses on Truth, New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1855.

16

From May 1839 to January 1841 and from February 1856 to September 1861. George Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, ii, 661.

versity still emphasizes the classical side of higher education, his spirit is still apparent in it. Columbia Theological Seminary prides itself in the fact that Thornwell's theology and polity remain its tradition and its teaching. Although the southern Presbyterian church in some respects has departed from the ideals which he set for it, in theory and, in part, in practice, that denomination still remains what it has been in the past, the embodiment of J. H. Thornwell as the Scottish church was the embodiment of John Knox.

In his posthumous influence, Thornwell's main contributions have come through his Life and Letters and through his four volumes of Collected Writings. For many years the latter were used as collateral readings in theology for seminary students in certain of the southern Presbyterian schools of divinity.

III. Thornwell as a Philosopher

Professor Windelband has written that the nineteenth century in England and on the continent can scarcely be considered a philosophical one. The literature produced was extensive. The period's ultimate significance was its careful re-consideration¹⁷ of the typical conceptions and principles of an earlier period. This is equally true of nineteenth century American philosophy.

Philosophical thought in America during this period followed two lines. The one which eventuated in what H. G. Townsend termed our most distinctive philosophy was largely the result of an ^celectic sort of philosophizing by persons who had attained their preeminence in other fields.¹⁸ This was Emersonian transcendentalism. By and large this type of thinking as a system of philosophy affected only a select few of the New England aristocracy. The other line of development was a continuation of Scottish common sense realism which, as Morris R. Cohen acknowledged, remained, at least until about the opening of the ¹⁹twentieth century, the basis of our academic philosophy.

In philosophy as well as in law and literature, our American traditions have been predominantly British. Chiefly because this heritage of British empiricism was so thoroughly woven into the very fabric of American civilization, German philosophy was slow in manifesting itself in our academic life. The principal concepts of German transcendentalism were known outside academic circles through the writings of the New England thinkers. There was an active center of Hegelian philosophy in St. Louis after 1866. But it was not until near the close of the nineteenth century that any German philosophy was systematically presented in American college class-rooms.

18

H. G. Townsend, Philosophical Ideas in the United States, p. 5.

19

Morris R. Cohen, "On American Philosophy," The New Republic, vol. xx (September 3, 1919), p. 149.

It was mainly through the influence of James McCosh at Princeton and Noah Porter at Yale during the period following the Civil War that the American interpretation of Scottish common sense realism became widely accepted. Just how much influence this type of thought had prior to this time scholarly research has yet to discover. It is known, however, that this influence upon American thought was considerable. In 1768 John Witherspoon came from Scotland to be president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University). A mature thinker at the time of his emigration, Witherspoon's philosophical ideas were well fixed. "These ideas were the tenets of Scottish realism and the common sense school of Reid and others." With the force of a commanding personality, Witherspoon, as his biographer claimed, firmly implanted "at Princeton its traditional and almost official philosophical doctrine."²⁰ A manuscript set of student's notes from the lectures in moral philosophy which were delivered by Princeton's president S. S. Smith circa 1806 reveals that the philosophical tradition established by Witherspoon had been maintained by his successor.²¹ Levi Hedge was appointed by Harvard in 1810 as America's first professor whose teaching was devoted entirely to the field of philosophy. He taught metaphysics and logic along lines indicated by Scottish

20

V. L. Collins, President Witherspoon, ii, 199.

21

"Lectures in Moral Philosophy", c. 1806, by President S. S. Smith, D. D., of Princeton College. Student's notes. Mss. collection, Princeton Theological Seminary library, Princeton, New Jersey.

realism. Francis Wayland, President and Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy at Brown University from 1827 to 1855, followed Butler in his ethical theory and Reid and Stewart in metaphysics, epistemology, psychology and ethics. In 1855 Wayland published the first edition of his Moral Science. This work passed through many revisions and editions. By 1868, 137,000 copies of it had been sold. The South gave it a warm reception.²³ The American Quarterly Review, Philadelphia, carried favorable reviews of Dugald Stewart's The Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man, (1829; the American edition), of James Mackintosh's A General View of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy, (1832; the American edition), and of Richard Whately's Elements of Logic, (1837; edition not specified). In 1853, The New Englander, New Haven, Connecticut, in a review of the American edition of Sir William Hamilton's writings and of an appreciation of them by an American, stated: "Hamilton has been the great name in English philosophy for about a quarter of a century, and it is quite amusing to observe what a large number of writers have suddenly awoke to a consciousness

22

H. G. Townsend, op. cit., p. 101.

23

J. O. Murray, Francis Wayland, pp. 140, 203, 218-219. See also William E. Drake, "Higher Education in North Carolina before 1860", University of North Carolina Ph. D. thesis. Mss. typescript collection, University of North Carolina library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. pp. 354-355.

of his merit."

H. G. Townsend in his otherwise admirable work, Philosophical Ideas in the United States, made no mention of philosophical developments in the South. These developments are not without their significance especially in relation to the influence of Scottish realism. The philosophical background of the Scotch-Irish immigrants who made their way down the Atlantic seaboard to settle was as important a contribution to the indigenous culture of this area as other elements in their heritage. Princeton University with its philosophical tradition of Scottish realism was patronized by Southerners in such numbers that, until the 1850's, the institution was considered by North and South alike as southern in its sympathies. Graduates of Princeton were responsible for leadership in, and in many cases for the actual founding of, institutions of higher education in the

25

South. The intellectual dominance of the Presbyterian denomination on the Atlantic seaboard up to the middle of the nineteenth century was a part of this area's thought life. The prevalence of Scotch Presbyterian theology gave added prestige to Scottish philosophy.

"The men of the South have been men of action and seldom

24

Anon., "Literary Notices," The New Englander, vol. xi, no. 4 (November, 1853), p. 643.

25

The University of North Carolina, the University of Georgia and Davidson College are but a few of those which might be mentioned in this connection.

philosophers," so wrote a prominent historian of the South,
 U. B. Phillips, in 1904.²⁶ More recent research is tending to
 modify this judgment. There must have been others who realized
 that what Calhoun said for South Carolina in the United States
 Senate was also true for their states: "I know that she can
 never be a great State; and that the only distinction to which
 she can aspire must be based on the moral and intellectual ac-
 quirements of her sons. To the development of these, much of
 her attention has been directed."²⁷ The early movement in
 this country for state supported colleges and universities was
 fostered chiefly in the South. The higher type of Northern
 journalism received much support from the South. The general
 level of education may have been lower and information may have
 been less widely disseminated in the South than it was in the
 North, but the Old South did have its philosophical interests
 among the "chosen few." A part of these interests it shared
 with the North in maintaining the academic philosophical tradi-
 tions of this country, Scottish realism.

This philosophy is termed realism because it held that data
given by sense perception and by other modes of knowledge is
significant of things and of persons as they exist. The phil-
 osophy is designated common sense realism for it maintained that

 26

U. B. Phillips, "Conservation and Progress in the Cotton
 Belt," South Atlantic Quarterly, vol. iii, no. 1 (January,
 1904), p. 2.

27

Quoted by D. D. Wallace, History of South Carolina, iii, 31.

awareness of one's own consciousness and of one's own conscience gives first principles of knowledge (common sense) which can no more be doubted than can the reality of the world of which sense perception treats. The philosophy is described as Scottish for it was Scotchmen who gave the system its full exposition for the first time and Scotchmen who interested themselves in further refining the system.

The first of these thinkers worthy of note was Thomas Reid (1710-1796), Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, who is acknowledged as the founder of the Scottish school of philosophy. The development of his philosophy was largely a reaction against the skepticism of Hume. It was also a reaction against the idealism of Berkeley. Reid's philosophical efforts have been interpreted both as "the representative of presbyterian Scotland in its quest for a speculative philosophy" and as an endeavor to apply to the realm of mind that experimental method which had led to discovery in the science of physics.²⁸ Hume confessed that his skeptical conclusions conflicted with the ordinary beliefs of men. Reid escaped the dilemma by laying stress on these beliefs, claiming that a sound philosophy could have no other basis. Reid's ethical theory rests upon the authority of conscience as an intuition of right and wrong. So eagerly was this philosophy adopted and so tenaciously was it maintained that in 1858, almost one hundred years after Reid's personal influence in Scotland, Hamil-

²⁸ H. Laurie, Scottish Philosophy in its National Development, p. 123.

ton's edition of his work was in great demand. In epistemology and in ontology, Reid is often credited, as by Professor Pringle-Pattison, with having given for the Scotch the answer²⁹ to Hume which Kant gave for the Germans. The mantle of Reid fell on Dugald Stewart (1753-1828). His chief accomplishment was the influence he possessed over his students, many of whom attained prominence. In general Stewart attempted to follow Reid as closely as possible. He first introduced into the school the conception that however much of the attributes of mind and of matter are known, of the essence of either we are³⁰ totally ignorant.

One of Stewart's most gifted pupils was his successor in the chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, Thomas Brown (1778-1820). Brown was not noted for his speculative originality but rather for the literary merit of his³¹ Lectures. His influence with his students and his published writings aided materially in the spread of Scottish realism. The thinker who, after Stewart, modified Reid's philosophy was Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856). Hamilton achieved his philo-

29

Ibid., pp. 134, 151, 160.

30

Ibid., pp. 203, 216, 221, 228. W. R. Sorley, A History of English Philosophy, pp. 202, 203.

31

H. Laurie, op. cit., pp. 235, 245. Thomas Brown was one of Britain's minor poets.

sophical reputation first by an article in the Edinburgh Review of 1829 in which he brilliantly attacked his contemporary, the French eclectic Victor Cousin, who had advanced the Philosophy of the Unconditioned. On the basis of this article, Hamilton was elected to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh in 1836. He remained in this position until his death. The extent of Hamilton's erudition and the fact that during his lifetime he was the only outstanding philosopher in Scotland, gave him a reputation as a philosopher which some later critics have doubted whether he deserved.³² Hamilton reasserted Stewart's position. Knowledge is possible only under certain conditions, and even then, knowledge can only be of attributes of mind and of matter, not of the essences. Nevertheless, consciousness and primary beliefs (common sense) must be accepted as productive of data concerning unknown essences. Space and time for Hamilton were primary beliefs which condition all human knowledge. Hamilton's student, Henry L. Mansel, known chiefly for his Bampton Lectures, The Limits of Religious Thought, 1858, and Herbert Spencer in his First Principles, 1862, are typical of the thinkers who have carried on the epistemological theory enunciated by Hamilton and by the Scottish school.³³

32

Ibid., p. 255. W. R. Sorley, op. cit., pp. 237, 240. Andrew Seth, Scottish Philosophy, pp. 193-194. John Veitch, Hamilton, pp. 10-11.

33

H. Laurie, op. cit., pp. 258, 259, 264, 268-269, 278, 289, 290.

James H. Thornwell's first contacts with Scottish realism did not come through the American interpretation which, as has been indicated, was prevalent in the North during his student days. His access to Scottish realism was more direct than that. It was not without significance that Thornwell inherited from both his parents a fondness for both things and ideas British. He spoke with hearty approval of "the sturdy common sense of Englishmen."³⁴ Before he was twelve years of age he had read Locke's "Essay on Human Understanding." Soon afterward, he discovered the volumes of Dugald Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind in the library of his benefactor. The reading of this work, he later confessed, gave him the first conscious bias to philosophy. Before his entrance into college, Thornwell had memorized long passages from Stewart, Jonathan Edwards and John Owen. During his college years, he read writings of Berkeley, Hume, Swift, Brown and Shaftesbury, as well as Plato, Aristotle and Cicero in the original languages. Shortly after graduation from college, he projected a review of Sir³⁵ James Mackintosh's View of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy.

The philosophical tradition of South Carolina College had been set by its first president, Rev. Jonathan Maxcy, D. D., a New England Baptist minister. He had been for ten years presi-

³⁴

Collected Writings, iii, 222.

³⁵

B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 44-45, 63, 66, 72, 75, 93.

dent of Brown University, his alma mater, and for two years president of Union College, Schenectady, New York, before coming to South Carolina. President Maxcy acquired a reputation as a scholar of metaphysics. Little is known of his philosophical position other than what can be inferred from the fact that he had had his training in a center of New England Scottish realism and from the fact that he established a tradition in South Carolina College for that type of philosophical thought.

36

That tradition was somewhat disturbed by the influence of Maxcy's successor, the colorful Thomas Cooper, M. D. Cooper was an Englishman, Oxford-trained, and an industrial chemist. Interested in social experiments, Cooper, in company with a friend, visited Paris for a first-hand observation of the French Revolution in 1792. Here he was greeted by Robespierre and other Jacobins; it has been conjectured that Cooper was a member of this party. In England he was related both by friendship and by marital ties to Joseph Priestley, a Deist and a disciple of Bentham in ethical thought. Cooper came to America with Priestley. Locating in Pennsylvania, he took up a political career, during the course of which he served two prison terms: one for slander of John Adams, President of the United States, and a second for conduct in office unbecoming a judge. There followed professorships in chemistry at Carlisle (later Dickinson) College and at the University of Pennsylvania. The University of New

York conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine. Thomas Jefferson wrote: "Cooper is acknowledged by every enlightened man who knows him, to be the greatest man in America, in the powers of mind, and in acquired information; and that, without a single exception."³⁷ In 1817 Jefferson had Cooper elected to the chair of chemistry in the newly organized University of Virginia. Presbyterians of that state under the persistent leadership of Dr. John H. Rice succeeded in preventing Cooper's installation at Charlottesville on grounds of his religious unorthodoxy and intolerance.

It was at this point in his career, when he was sixty years of age, that Cooper was brought to South Carolina College. Within a year he was made president. Shortly thereafter the liberality of his religious views became apparent. A member in good standing in the Episcopal church at Columbia, he was commonly considered to hold Socinian or Unitarian views.³⁸ Later he was interpreted as a Deist. The criterion for religion, he publicly stated, should be that "laid down by Christ himself,³⁹ 'By their fruits shall ye know them.'" In ethical theory, he

37

D. Malone, The Public Life of Thomas Cooper, p. 237; see also pp. 129, 135, 169, 203, 211-226, 231, 241-242. C. F. Himes, Life and Times of Judge Thomas Cooper, p. 7. M. Kelley, Additional Chapters on Thomas Cooper, p. 16.

38

J. H. Thornwell, "Memoir of Dr. Henry," Southern Quarterly Review, 3d ser., vol. i, no. 1 (April, 1856), p. 201.

39

Thomas Cooper, Address, 1821, p. 4.

tended toward the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham. He could find no excuse for metaphysics. In psychology Cooper, proposing a roughly formulated materialism based upon the premise that the brain-mass was adequate to account for all mental activities, concluded that the hypothesis of an immaterial soul was unnecessary. He was not altogether friendly to the institution of slavery. His political theories which he publicized widely have led to his being termed "the father of nullification in South Carolina."⁴⁰ His intellectual abilities and attainments were impressive; his nature, benevolent. So frank and simple was he in his manners that, despite all those elements within his thought which tended to make him unpopular in South Carolina in the 1820's, the State maintained him as president of its college. Thornwell admitted that these same qualities led to his personal admiration for Cooper. Early in Thornwell's college career a friend in writing to him referred to Cooper as "your idol." By the end of Thornwell's college years he was so firmly convinced of the errors in Cooper's views that, when a resolution to support Cooper against the charges brought against him publicly was introduced before the senior class, Thornwell led⁴¹ the movement which defeated the resolution.

The apprehension with which Thornwell viewed Cooper's philo-

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F. Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement, p. 30. M. Kelley, op. cit., pp. 38, 39.

41

B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 60, 82. J. H. Thornwell, op. cit., p. 200.

sophy led to an appreciation of Robert Henry. Thornwell claimed that conversations with this man constituted the main benefit he enjoyed in college. Later, he stated: "To him more than to any other man . . . we are indebted for the direction of our own studies, and for whatsoever culture our mind has received."⁴²

Robert Henry, Charlestonian by birth, was educated in England. He received a Master of Arts degree from the University of Edinburgh in 1814. His studies in philosophy were pursued under the direction of Thomas Brown. Sir William Hamilton was his fellow-student. After a year of European travel and another of preaching in a Charleston Calvinistic French church, Henry was elected Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at South Carolina College. This was in 1818. Until 1854 when he was retired, with but a brief interruption, he remained a professor at the college. The influence of this man and of his type of philosophy upon the traditions of the institution was obviously large.⁴³

With the exception of politics, in which field they were agreed, Cooper and Henry differed widely from each other. Thornwell claimed that on every point in ethics, philosophy and religion, they were poles apart. Henry devoted no little attention to metaphysics. In this subject he followed Thomas Brown. He

42

J. H. Thornwell, op. cit., p. 190. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 92.

43

The article by Thornwell mentioned above contains the most extensive biographical treatment of Henry available. The references in M. LaBorde, op. cit., and E. L. Green, The History of the University of South Carolina, are meager.

criticized points made both by Reid and by Hamilton. Henry had great admiration for Berkeley. He said, Thornwell reported, that if given the alternative, he would find it easier to maintain the non-existence of matter than the non-existence of mind. Although well versed in the German language, Henry knew little of German philosophy. He thought little of Kant and less of Kant's disciples.

Henry gave courses in the evidences of Christianity. These, Thornwell wrote, were not without their effect in saving the faith of men who had been tempted by the heresy of Cooper. He also taught the history of philosophy. He was the first professor in the college to give logic a pre-eminent place in the curriculum. Thornwell gave Henry the credit, thus, for establishing a tradition in logical thinking for which South Carolinians later became nationally famed.

In ethics Henry evolved a system of his own in which the duties of an ethical sort were regarded as arising out of the social nature of man and of God. Moral truth is discoverable by rational processes. Conscience is simply an emotional sanction for moral convictions.

He also gave courses in political philosophy. Thornwell gave him the distinction of being the first to introduce this subject in American collegiate instruction. Henry's background in this field was his study at Edinburgh of Adam Smith and Dugald Stewart.

It was, then, under the training of a man who had pursued his own philosophical studies with the great masters of Scottish realism that Thornwell formulated his own philosophical point of view. In light of this background, it is not particularly startling that he should have adopted the position of Scottish realism in philosophy. Maximillian LaBorde, Thornwell's colleague in the college, wrote glowingly of his philosophical abilities. "In his philosophy he sympathizes with the school of Reid and Stewart, and its ablest and most learned exponent, Sir William Hamilton."⁴⁵ Thornwell wrote of James McCosh's The Method of Divine Government, "We regard it as one of the first productions of the age."⁴⁶ In 1890 Noah Porter wrote: Thornwell "published many able and important discussions on Philosophical Theology and Ethics."⁴⁷ His disciple, colleague and successor at the theological seminary in Columbia, John L. Girardeau, wrote to B. M. Palmer, Thornwell's biographer, "You are correct . in assigning him, in the main, to the Scotch School of Philosophy."⁴⁸

Judging from the foot-note references to philosophical works in Thornwell's Collected Writings, he possessed a large number

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M. LaBorde, op. cit., p. 354.

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Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. v, no. 3 (January, 1851), p. 434.

⁴⁷

Noah Porter, Appendix to Ueberweg's History of Philosophy, American edition, pp. 459, 460.

⁴⁸

B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 542.

of major works in this field. Among the classical writers represented are: Aquinas' Summa, Aristotle (three titles), Bacon's Works, a work in German by Brandis on Aristotle, Plato and Cicero. Thornwell referred to two German histories of philosophy, those of Brucker and of Schwegler. He quoted from Fichte and from Schelling without specific reference. He read Kant both⁴⁹ in translation and in the original. He seems to have known relatively few American authors in philosophical subjects. He did refer to works by Jasper Adams, president of Charleston (South Carolina) College, William Ellery Channing, Jonathan⁵⁰ Edwards, and James McCosh. He referred to three or four works by his contemporary, the French philosopher, Victor Cousin. In the main, however, Thornwell's philosophical taste ran to works by English and Scotch writers. He possessed five sets of Bampton Lectures and one set of Boyle Lectures. The foremost works of the following well known writers are included among those to which Thornwell made reference in his writings: Berkeley, Butler (whose Analogy was termed a masterly treatise), Sir William Hamilton (four titles), Hume ("The skepticism of Mr. Hume and the disciples of the same school . . . are in fatal contradiction⁵¹ to the whole spirit and genius of inductive philosophy."),

49

Ibid., p. 373.

50

Noah Porter, op. cit., pp. 459ff., lists an imposing array of philosophical writings by American contemporaries of Thornwell which he might have known.

51

Collected Writings, iii, 261.

Locke, (two titles: Thornwell objected that Locke had overlooked the fact that understanding is, and must be, a source of ideas to itself.⁵²), John Stuart Mill's Logic ("one of the most valuable works which has been published in the present century."⁵³), J. D. Morell (two titles), William Paley (two titles), Dugald Stewart (Works in seven volumes), Jeremy Taylor (Works in ten volumes), William Whewell's Elements of Morality and Richard Whately's Elements of Logic. Also mentioned by Thornwell are writings by Bentley, Beattie, Coleridge ("we do not regard Coleridge as authority for anything but literary theft."⁵⁴), Hottelinger, Howe, The North British Review and the Edinburgh Review, Simon, Thomas Stanley, James Townley, Warburton, Bishop Wilson and Wolfius' Ontologia (the source of quotations from Hobbes).

IV. Thornwell as a Theologian

Calvinistic theology in America may be viewed as developing along two divergent lines. One of these originated chiefly with Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). By his acceptance of a Berkeleyan-like idealism, Edwards modified the strict Calvinism of New England Puritanism. Further qualifications were offered by Sam-

52

Ibid., 111, 218.

53

Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. iv, no. 4 (April, 1851), p. 509.

54

Collected Writings, 111, 102.

uel Hopkins (1721-1803), Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), and by Charles G. Finney (1792-1875). This type of theological development has been characteristic of Congregationalism and of more liberal Presbyterianism. Calvinism thus modified was often referred to during the nineteenth century as the New England or New School theology.

Calvinism as the original English Presbyterian-Puritans received it, being more directly derived from the doctrines of Augustine and Calvin, was distinguished as Old School. Its characteristic emphases were placed upon the sovereignty of God and upon the guilt of inherited depravity. Charles (1797-1878) and A. A. Hodge (1823-1886) at Princeton seminary, Robert J. Breckinridge (1800-1871) at the Danville, Kentucky, seminary and James H. Thornwell (1812-1862) were advocates of Old School theology.

In 1801 a part of the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church consolidated forces under a Plan of Union with a view to the evangelization of the West. The followers of Princeton and the Old School theology became increasingly apprehensive of the Plan of Union. They were convinced that theological error was being injected into the Presbyterian Church by this association. By means of a conservative attitude toward slavery the Old School combined its forces North and South. By 1837 its strength in the General Assembly was sufficient to demand and receive action whereby New England opinions and influences were

largely removed from the Presbyterian Church. The following year found the New School Presbyterian Church formed into a separate organization.

There was a certain amount of New School influence in the South during the controversy.⁵⁶ In general, however, that section was as conservative in its theology as it came to be in its social thought. Early in its existence through its first professors and its first students, the theological seminary at Columbia, received influences from the older as well as from the newer theological traditions of New England.⁵⁷ By 1836 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, patron of the seminary, had become dominated by the Old School party. Thornwell indicated in a letter to his wife written during the meeting of that Synod in 1836 that the Old School party had determined to push action toward excinding New Schoolism and that he would support the movement. In a similar letter, written in 1837 from the meeting of General Assembly after the excluding action had been

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Zebulon Crocker, The Catastrophe of the Presbyterian Church in 1837, including a full view of the recent theological controversies in New England, New Haven, 1838, p. 294. See also A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, one volume edition of 1912, pp. 44-49.

⁵⁶"We have New Schoolism in the South -- Congregationalism from New England There is some talk of a general central Synod of the South." Letter: John Witherspoon, South Carolina, to R. J. Breckinridge, April 15, 1835. Quoted in E. A. Moore, "The Early Life of Robert J. Breckinridge, 1800-1845", University of Chicago Ph. D. thesis, 1935, p. 49.

57

William C. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 19-20. T. S. Perry, The Life of Francis Lieber, p. 113.

taken, Thornwell expressed his conviction that the New School members were never constitutionally and regularly a part of the Church and therefore it was no hardship to say so.⁵⁸

As far as the South is concerned, the popularity of the conservative Old School theology may be viewed as a part of a larger movement of thought. The first four decades of the nineteenth century brought the beginnings of wide-spread criticism by southerners of Jeffersonian principles in all fields of thought. The modifications of Calvinism offered by New School theology were, on the whole, unacceptable in southern Presbyterianism. Some of the leaders would have made Jonathan Edwards the infallible test of orthodoxy. Others were critical even of Edwards' Calvinistic variations. These increasingly desired to re-examine Calvin's works together with the writings of the early English Puritan thinkers and those of the continental reformed theologians of the Calvinistic sort. James H. Thornwell was the leader of the latter group. Such was his influence that as late as 1916 a representative of Columbia seminary wrote: "The theology of Thornwell and Girardeau must always be the type for which this institution stands."⁵⁹

58

Letter: J. H. Thornwell to his wife, November 24, 1836. Anderson-Thornwell letters. Mss. collection, University of North Carolina library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 211.

59

George A. Blackburn, ed., The Life Work of John L. Girardeau, p. 139.

In the footnotes of the four volumes of Thornwell's Collected Writings, there are references to over 300 different books of a strictly theological nature. His library in this field must have been unusually extensive. One hundred and twenty five of the titles cited may be considered of minor importance. A survey of the remaining titles is rather revealing in disclosing the sources of Thornwell's theology.

There are six titles in Biblical literature. Three of these are works by Jahn, Delitzsch and Leusden on the criticism of Old Testament language and literature. There is one Greek lexicon, Suicerus, and two New Testament commentaries, one in English by Lightfoot, the other in German by Eichhorn.

Thornwell's collection of writings of the early church fathers was extensive. The more familiar names are represented: Athanasius (Opera), Augustin (eight titles), Chrysostom (three titles), Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian (five titles), Eusebius (three titles), Irenaeus (quoted indirectly), Jerome (nine titles), Josephus, Justin, Origen (Opera), Tertullian (two titles), and The Books of the Stromata. There are also works by the lesser known figures such as: Dionysius, Ambrose of Milan (two titles), Cyril of Jerusalem (two titles), Epiphanius (six titles), Maimonides (from whom Thornwell derived his "contingency" argument for the existence of God), and Ruffinus (three titles).

Of the medieval and modern Roman Catholic theologians, Thornwell had at least ten different writings. There was Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica, eight works by Bellarmine (1542-1621), and Pascal's Provincial Letters (with Nicole's notes).

Concerning the Reformation and its theology, Thornwell had access to at least eight works. He had D'Aubigne's and Wallington's histories, Melancthon's Opera Omnia, and the Institutes (his text-book in teaching systematic theology), Commentaries and Tracts by John Calvin.

It is significant that Thornwell made reference to a large number of writings by both English and Dutch Puritan thinkers. There was Stephen Charnock's Works, Chillingworth's Works, Cocceius' Summa Theologica (which work in part led to the popularity of the Federal Calvinistic theology), De Moor (three titles), Richard Hooker's Works and Ecclesiastical Polity, John Howe (three titles), Knapp's Lectures on Theology (a Kantian Calvinist), John Owen's Works (representing the most rigid of all Puritan thought), Franciscus Turretin's Institutio Theologiae Elencticae (a Calvinistic work used as a text at Princeton seminary into the twentieth century), and Van Maastricht's Theologica.

Thornwell's collection of theological works by Englishmen who were his contemporaries was likewise large. These included six sets of Bampton Lectures. Henry L. Mansel's Limits of Religious Thought on which Thornwell drew for a part of his epistemology was one of these. Aside from these, there were writings by Bickersteth (Works), Bishop George Bull (Works), Thomas Chalmers (Evidences of Christianity), Principal William Cunningham (The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation), South, R. C. Trench (two titles), Warburton (two titles).

The works which Thornwell employed in reference to the English Puritan movement included Neal's History of the Puritans (Tegge's edition, London, 1837). These consisted mainly, however, of four volumes by John Milton: Adimadversons upon the Remonstrance, Reformation in England, Apology for Smectymnus, and The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth. Thornwell prized Paradise Lost from which he memorized long passages which he frequently used in the pulpit.

Apart from Kant's philosophical works, Thornwell seemed to have possessed nothing in the original from the German theologians of the early nineteenth century. He mentioned several of them, such as Schleiermacher and Strauss. He had the works of the more evangelical German writers, Nitzsch and Max Müller. Development of the Tübingen school of theology under Ritschl had not yet delivered its full impact on American thought. Certain implications which this school was to follow out later Thornwell anticipated. Collecting these implications of Hegelian and Kantian philosophies under the term rationalism, Thornwell fought it desperately. He considered it the new form of infidelity.

In his writings, Thornwell ignored American theological thought almost entirely. Apart from William Ellery Channing's Works, he seems to have known nothing directly of New England religious thought. He mentioned only four American thinkers aside from Channing. One of these was R. J. Breckinridge, his personal friend. Another was Charles Hodge who, from 1844 to 1861 on several issues was Thornwell's chief General Assembly opponent. A third was Jonathan Edwards. The fourth was Samuel

J. Baird whose The First Adam and the Second the New School considered hopelessly conservative. Thornwell viewed it as permeated with a dangerous type of error. During the early part of his life, Thornwell read closely the religious journals published by Breckinridge. Later he followed Hodge's Princeton Review. Apart from these, however, although himself an editor of a religious quarterly, Thornwell seems not to have known of the tremendous volume of religious periodical literature being issued in the North during his lifetime.

An interesting part of his theological library was a set of nine catechisms, confessions of faith and reports of Church councils, Catholic and Protestant, ancient, medieval and modern. In discussing the history of theological thought or that of church polity, he was accustomed to refer to these writings. Represented were the Westminster Assembly, the councils of Trent, Dort, and Augsburg, and the confessions of faith Helvetic, Gallic, Anglican, and Scotch.

What has been stated concerning the adequacy of Thornwell's aptitude and equipment as a philosophical thinker may be applied with equal appropriateness to his ability as a theologian. Something of the extent of his available source materials has been indicated. The indication is that he drew heavily upon Anglican and Scottish Calvinism as well as upon Calvin's works as sources for his theology.

By the time he had entered into his active ministry, Thornwell had adopted the Old School position in theology. He later referred to the action of General Assembly in 1837 as God delivering the church from a long, dark and mournful bondage to Pelagian

principles. A paper which he wrote for the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia in 1838 was adopted by that body as its⁶⁰ confessed theological standard. Throughout the eighteen years of Thornwell's chaplaincy and professorship at South Carolina College his thinking was primarily theological in character. In 1856, in his inaugural address as professor of systematic theology at the Columbia seminary, he referred to Calvinism as his heritage from a noble mother. He also spoke of his entrance into the teaching of theology as that event toward which Providence had guided him from his earliest religious life, through his fondness for philosophy, his college teaching and⁶¹ his ministerial career.

An historian of the Presbyterian Churches in America has ranked Thornwell as the third most influential systematic theologian in nineteenth century Presbyterianism.⁶² One of Thornwell's students wrote posthumously that he held no theological views which were not the common possessions of the Old School church.⁶³ Thornwell's theology is clearly not distinctive in its doctrines. The presentation of its contents is, however,⁶⁴ as another noted, Thornwell's unique contribution to theology.

60

George Howe, op. cit., ii, 573f. Collected Writings, iv, 216.

61

Collected Writings, i, 574, 576.

62

R. E. Thompson, History of the Presbyterian Churches, p. 145.

63

T. Peck, op. cit., p. 434.

64

Thornton Whaling in the Centennial Addresses, 1912, p. 25.

By making the doctrine of justification central, he fused into a unity dogma and duty, theology and Christian ethics.

Because of its tendency to speak in pious terms while undermining the foundations of Christianity, Thornwell viewed the type of theology presented by Schleiermacher as the new infidelity. This, he prophesied, would become particularly dangerous in America. Its peculiar form of viciousness was its rejection of an objective revelation of God in Scriptures by a men-made, pantheistic philosophy. The issue between the rationalists and Christians, he perceived, hinged on the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures and the authority of the Bible.

In 1850 Thornwell wrote a friend that this issue would prove the ground of some desperate battles. By 1853 he was writing that there should be a thorough-going exposure of transcendental philosophy and that he was becoming chary of all opinions which conflict with the individuality of God.⁶⁵ This constitutes a basis for the claim that Thornwell's Discourses on Truth, 1855, was intended by its author to be a refutation of rationalism. Sir William Hamilton in a note acknowledging the gift of a copy⁶⁶ of this work did commend it for its philosophical acuteness. It is more likely, however, that Thornwell had in mind a series of articles which he wrote in The Southern Presbyterian Review from 1849 to 1856. Presumably these articles form a review of

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B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 374-375.

66

See Collected Writings, ii, 452.

J. D. Morell's The Philosophy of Religion. Actually, as they stand in the third volume of Thornwell's Collected Writings, they constitute an indictment of theological rationalism. The arguments employed are, in general, of the sort that later Calvinism has felt must be used against Ritschlianism. The acuteness of Thornwell's logic as applied to theological subjects is apparent no more clearly in any of his writings than in these pages.

Protestant thinkers in nineteenth century America like Thornwell were unable to view without a strong emotional reaction the rapid growth of the Roman Catholic Church. The 1840's found the validity of the Roman church a heatedly debated question in the Presbyterian Church. Anti-Catholicism became a national political issue when it was written into the platform of the American party. This group had some power in the 1850's when it was popularly known as the "Know-nothing" party.

Apart from certain restricted areas, the Catholic church was never large in the Old South. Yet from 1839 to the Civil War the prophetic zeal for righteousness which, in the North, was expended upon American slavery received partial sublimation in the South by attacks upon the Catholics. ⁶⁷ The bitterness of spirit engendered by the controversy is evidenced in these sen-

Incendiarism was charged against the Catholics in Columbia in 1853. Letter: A. T. McGill to his wife, January 15, 1853. Mss. collection, Presbyterian Historical Society library, Philadelphia. In 1855 "A. Citizen" of Charleston felt compelled to write Three Letters on the order of the Know-nothings to defend American Catholic patriotism.

timents written in his diary by a seventeen year old minister's son in 1857. "I read today that the Pope has an idea of establishing his spiritual humbug over on this continent. Let him come! . . . I hate not him but his abominable heresy and I'll fight against it . . . as long as one drop of blood remains unconsumed in my veins."⁶⁸

Apart from the general spirit in the section in which he lived, there are three considerations which may have contributed to Thornwell's opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. 1. Politically he was inclined to view with no little favor the general attitudes of the "Know-nothing" party.⁶⁹ 2. His close friendship with R. J. Breckinridge brought him into intimate contact with one of this country's strongest opponents of Catholicism.⁷⁰ In 1841, at Breckinridge's invitation, Thornwell wrote an article for publication attacking the validity of the Apocrypha. This led to a long series of bitterly worded open letters between Thornwell and Dr. A. P. Lynch of Charleston. Thornwell put his articles into book form in 1844. It was in this way that he received his first national recognition as a writer. 3. In 1845 the question of the validity of Catholic

68

Thornwell Jacobs, ed., Diary of W. P. Jacobs, p. 61.

69

In 1855 he wrote a Mississippi friend that if that party failed, the last hope of the Union was lost. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 479.

70

He had earned the popular title of "Robespierre of the Presbyterian Church." E. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 52.

baptism was raised before the General Assembly. In the debate which ensued Thornwell had a prominent part. The Assembly's decision to deny the validity of such baptism brought forth a protest from Hodge's Princeton Review. The articles which were exchanged between Thornwell and Hodge during the following years have been included in the former's Collected Writings. Through these various polemical activities, Thornwell was led into original research of the source materials. This study convinced him, on theoretical and theological grounds, that Romanism, in all its aspects, represented the perfect archetype of the Anti-Christ.

Thornwell's thought in this connection readily yields itself to a dual treatment. In this study his theological objections to Romanism are presented in one section and his views of the dangers of the Roman Catholic church as an element in society in another.

V. Thornwell as a Social Thinker

The developments in social life in his time could not but have had their effect upon Thornwell. Scientific discoveries in astronomy and in geology, the inauguration of the railroad and the telegraph, expeditions to the North Pole and into the heart of Africa, the cable laid on the floor of the Atlantic, the completion of the Suez canal, -- all these and other reverberations of the scientific world were beginning to make themselves felt upon the social life of the day. The period was marked by sharply contrasting political views both in this country and in

Europe. France lost its republican form of government under Napoleon's sway. Italy became unified and released from the Pope's temporal control. "Prussia" bristled with militarism and was engaged in certain social experiments which were viewed with some alarm in this country. "Austria" was in the process of modernization. Spain, having exiled her monarch, was forced to decide between a republic and a constitutional monarchy. In Asia, the doors of both China and Japan were opened for intercourse with the Western world powers. In India, Great Britain had begun to assume "the white man's burden."

Marked differences of opinion were also to be noted in the social thought of the United States during the period of 1830-1862. The differences concerning secession and slavery were the most apparent. From 1830, in the North there was a growing effort in the Church to make Christ's teachings the effective touchstone for all moral and social questions. In 1817 the first stirrings of the prohibition movement were felt. The question of bi-sexual suffrage was a burning issue. Socialism came to have prominent advocates such as Horace Greeley. The New England transcendentalists were pursuing the "Brook Farm" ⁷¹ experiment in social organization.

Meanwhile a Great Wall of public opinion was growing up between the North and the South. The South had its unique Negro problem. This involved a labor system which barred from the

southern states those new immigrants who were entering the North in great numbers throughout the nineteenth century. The North's reception of the immigrants had two effects. (1) It gave rise in the North to dreams of an exploitive industrialism. The southern counterpart to this was an ideal of Greek democracy. The plantation owners were to be the philosopher-kings; the Negroes, the enslaved barbarians. (2) With the impressive increases in the Northern population, the South became ever more conscious of itself as a numerical minority within the nation.⁷²

This consciousness on the part of the South impelled two great movements of political and social thought within the section. The first was the insistence upon the doctrine of states' rights. The other was the rejection of Jeffersonian equalitarianism. The former movement began in South Carolina in the late 1820's. It became a part of secession apologies both in the 1850's and in the 1860's. The latter movement was apparent in 1823 when Reverend Richard Furman of South Carolina wrote that the Bible's Golden Rule implied a social stratification and was applicable only within the same social class. The same views were voiced by Dr. W. A. Smith of Hampden-Sidney College in Virginia. Elaborate social theories resting on the thesis that an aristocratically controlled society was the only social form

whereby stability might be procured appeared in print in 1854.

These differences in political and social theories enhanced sectional loyalties both in the South and in the North. Each section lived more and more to itself. The mutual intercourse in culture and thought which should have paralleled the advantages of economic trade was made impossible. Thornwell made more of an effort to understand and appreciate the North than did other southerners of his time. Nevertheless, he confessedly had a great love of the South. His loyalty to South Carolina was almost a passion with him. ⁷⁴ This is reflected in most of his social thought.

He viewed with interest and with no little concern the conflicts in social theory both here and abroad. The issue he conceived to revolve about the question of the relation of man to society, of States to the individual and of the individual to the States. He was interested in the conflict, for out of it he thought the truth would emerge. He was concerned with it for he felt the contestants could be grouped under two classes, Christians and Atheists. The progress of humanity was at stake. Yet he prophesied that the principles underlying southern slavery would be vindicated. Despotism of masses, as he called

73

R. Furman, Exposition of the Baptist View of Slavery, Charleston, 1823. W. A. Smith, The Philosophy and Practise of Slavery, 1856. George Fitzhugh, Sociology for the South, 1854. Henry Hughes, A Treatise of Sociology, 1854.

74

B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 180, 366, 580.

communism, socialism and equalitarian democracy alike, would be defeated. The supremacy of a single will, as under a monarchy or a dictatorship, would also be defeated. Representative republican government he thought must be victorious.⁷⁵

During the period of 1830 - 1860 the most acute thinkers in the South were busy defending slavery as a system. Thornwell was one of them. His contemporaries spoke of his thought as representative. They indicated their evaluation of his influence by his popular title of "the Calhoun of the Church."⁷⁶

It has been speculated that had he employed his influence against slavery, the Civil War might have been averted. The historical significance of Thornwell's social and political thought is not inconsiderable. Dr. L. C. LaMotte, in Colored Light, 1937, wrote that the church today is facing much the same sort of social questions it did during Thornwell's day and that the principles as stated by him should indicate the churches' present aim and plan of action.⁷⁷

75

Collected Writings, iv, 403, 404, 405-406.

76

Ibid., iv, p. 380. See also L. G. Vander Velde, The Presbyterian Church and the Federal Union, 1860-1869, p. 30. Virginia Kirk Baker, "James H. Thornwell, Christian Educator of the Old South", Duke University M. A. thesis, 1935, p. i.

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W. H. Mills, "South Carolina's Contributions to Presbyterianism", Synod of South Carolina Minutes, 1936, p. 76. H. Shelton Smith, "The Church and the Social Order in the Old South as Interpreted by James H. Thornwell," Church History, vol. vii, no. 2 (June, 1938), p. 115. L. C. LaMotte, Colored Light, Clinton, South Carolina, 1937, p. 252.

On one occasion Thornwell seems to have impressed Calhoun with his learning in social and political matters. Thornwell's extant writings do not make it easy to establish the scope or nature of his studies along these lines. He referred to works in political philosophy by Brougham and by William Paley. His own social thought reflects something of the emphases set forth by Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. At one point in his writings, however, Thornwell expressed open contempt for some of these thinkers' lesser works. The one source book in social and political theory which he heartily recommended was Francis Lieber's⁷⁸ Political Ethics.

Like others of his time, Thornwell perhaps was not as careful in applying scholarly disciplines to his social thinking as he was along other lines. Nevertheless he obviously attempted to make his social and political thought strictly consistent with his ethical and religious theories. It is this fact which makes the inclusion of this aspect of his thought pertinent to the present study.

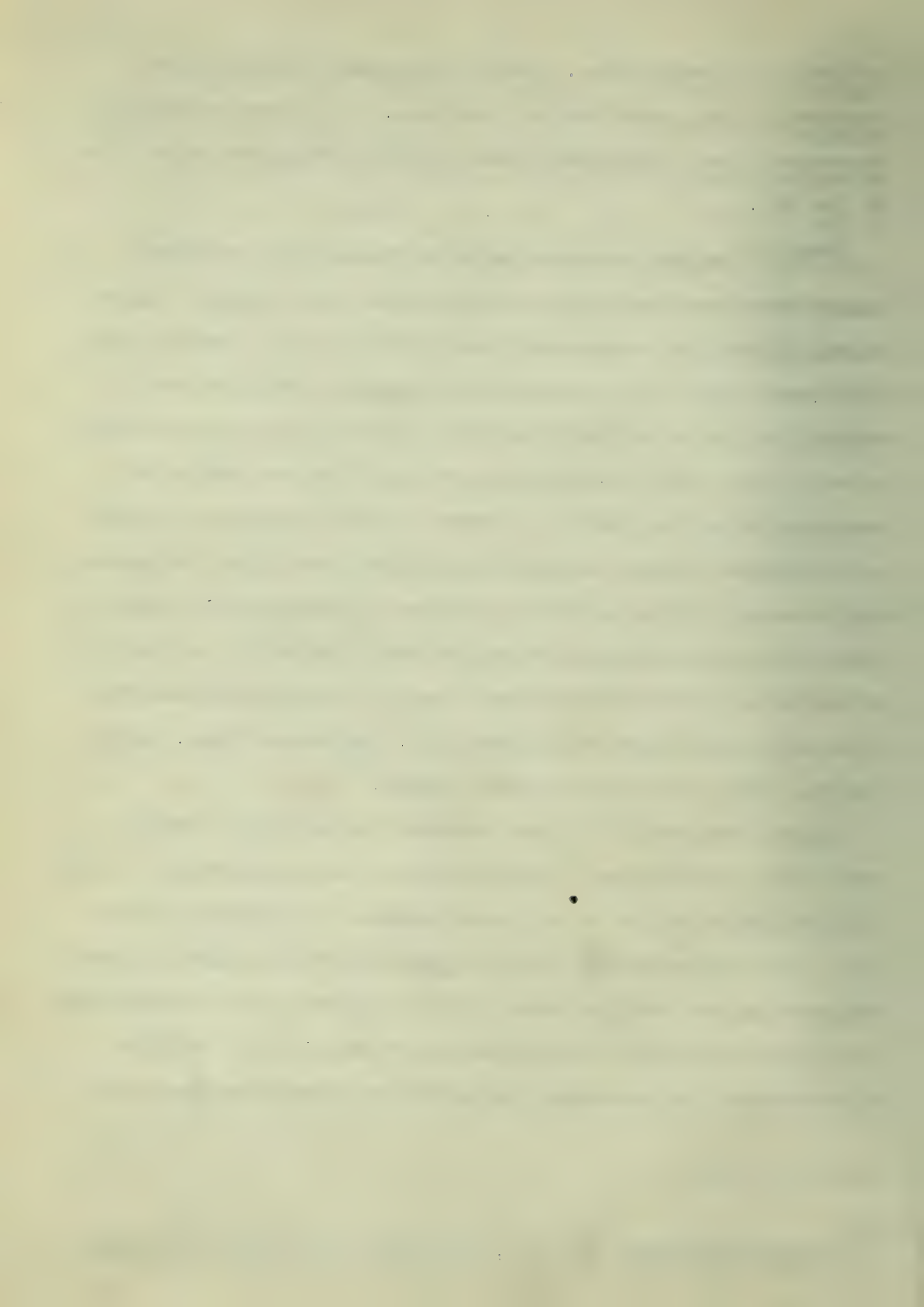
VI. The Polemical Character of Thornwell's Thought

Controversy was one of the characteristics of nineteenth century American religious thought. It was a time of sharp conflicts between Protestants and Catholics and between the various

Protestant denominations. Bitter polemics were prominent features in the crude revival meetings. In a more refined way controversy was a dominant element in the religious journalism of the day.

There is no one characteristic of Thornwell's religious thought more peculiar than a fondness for open debate. Early in his ministry he enunciated the principle that a part of the Christian's duty was to resist with firmness every effort to corrupt the purity of the Church in doctrine and in discipline. In one of his last writings, he affirmed that the genius of Presbyterianism was that it allowed for the discovery of truth by discussion without placing moral approbrium upon the persons who sincerely differ in their opinions. Throughout his life he proclaimed and practised the belief that discussion was God's appointed means for discovering error and removing it and for discovering truth and establishing it. Evidence alone, he insisted, should be the measure of assent.

Apart from certain of the lectures in theology, most of Thornwell's writings are controversial. In no department of his thinking did he claim to be comprehensive. He stated as his aim in philosophy to say what is not rather than what is truth. The same may be said for much of his thought in other directions also. In philosophy he attacked the "rationalists" and the utilitarians. In theology, he sought to counteract the theo-



logical implications of German idealism, Roman Catholicism, Pelagianism, Arminianism and Socinianism. In church polity he attempted to defend the two-kingdom theory of Church and State of the sixteenth century Puritans. In social theory, he attacked the social contract theory of Hobbes, the racial pluralism of certain southern social thinkers and abolitionism of the North.

Chapter II

The Sources of Human Knowledge and the Nature of Reality

- I. Philosophy**
- II. Logic**
- III. Epistemology**
- IV. Revelation**
- V. Metaphysics**

Chapter II

I. Philosophy

The problem of philosophy, according to Thornwell, is to unfold the mystery of the universe -- to tell whence it came and how it has been produced. "Being in itself and being in its laws" is, as Aristotle described it, "the end and aim of that science which he (Aristotle) dignifies as wisdom."¹ Man's observation of being in itself and in its laws must proceed along two lines. Sense perception is the first of these. Philosophy also implies reflection, speculation; it is thought questioning the spontaneous processes of mind, thought returning upon itself and seeking the nature, authority and criterion of its own laws.

The proper method for philosophy is that which Lord Francis Bacon, whom Thornwell termed the great father of modern philosophy, enunciated. Had those thinkers adopted it, the Hegel-

¹ Collected Writings, i, 492.

ians and the followers of Spinoza and Strauss as well as the German transcendentalists would have observed clearly the folly of seeking for universal truths by which the essential nature and being of the universe might be compassed by the mind of man. "The true procedure of philosophy is to inquire what are the deliverances of consciousness, to accept these as ultimate principles, and to regulate our conclusions by these data."² A philosopher should penetrate into the hearts of men and find out the meaning which has real significance there. "The common sense of men is right,³ though language does not always adequately represent it." That is to say, the data given man by sense perception and by self-consciousness must be trusted as the only reliable knowledge of Being which men possess. The true philosopher, as Bacon is reported to have said, is one who, like the bee, gathers his materials from afar and then digests it all for himself. "The empirical philosophers are like pismires; they only lay up and use their store. The rationalists are like the spiders; they spin out of their own bowels. But give me a philosopher who, like the bee, hath a middle faculty, gathering from abroad, but digesting that which is gathered by his own virtue."⁴ Observers and interpreters, not legislators or masters, of nature, we humans are

² Ibid., i, 217, 86; iii, 218-219, 262, 268; iv, 106.

³ Ibid., ii, 545.

⁴ Ibid., i, 46; iii, 262: quotation from Bacon's Apophthegms.

to employ our faculties, and implicitly receive whatever in their sound and healthful condition they report to be true. We are not to make phenomena, but to study those which are submitted to our consciousnesses.

The motivation in philosophical studies must be consistent with the method of philosophy. The true spirit of philosophy Thornwell felt should be the ingenuous love of knowledge. This was also the view of Locke. The pervading love of truth for its own sake is the spirit which should regulate all opinions, the standard and touchstone of intellectual integrity. Thornwell included within the realm of ethical duty that unbiased and impartial handling of truth which is motivated by a love for truth in and of itself. "He only deserves commendation . . . who begins with the predominating love of truth, and maintains it steadily and sincerely all the subsequent periods of his history."⁵

The principal danger in philosophy is the acceptance of unproved maxim-like hypotheses as truths. Absolute Idealism errs just at this point. "A single crochet of philosophers, that the relation of knowledge implies an analogy of the subject and the object, involved for centuries the whole subject of perception and the mode of our knowledge of the external world in confusion, hypothesis and contradiction. The ideal theory was the offspring of this simple proposition; and it

⁵
Ibid., ii, 596. See also pp. 499, 500.

might even yet retain its ascendancy . . . , if the skepticism of Hume, . . . had not arisen and prepared the way for a sounder metaphysics."⁶

Such an error reveals the limitations of philosophy as a means for the discovery of truths. The study of philosophy should lead men to discover in nature the wisdom and goodness of God, to further the means for increasing human comforts, for exalting human destiny and for increasing man's piety. A sound philosophy should concur with the sure word of inspiration in its view of man. That philosophy rarely achieves such accord is indicative of its defection. Philosophy is chiefly "defective from its ignorance of the fall, especially in relation to the will."⁷ While philosophers and the Bible agree in commending self-knowledge as a principal branch of wisdom, Thornwell stated, they differ widely as to its nature and end. One tends to self-sufficiency and independence, the other to humility and self-despair. Philosophers make self-knowledge the source of pride and vanity. True self-knowledge is the sense of entire helplessness in ourselves and of dependence upon God. Hence, humility is the foundation of Christian philosophy; it is self-emptiness to be filled with God. The ignorance of man as fallen, sinful and depraved is that which leads the philosopher to vanity and to error. "Error is, therefore, proof of disease."

⁶
Ibid., ii, 506.

⁷
Ibid., i, 614 (the underlining mine): ii, 513; iii, 99.

If man's rational faculties were not diseased, there would be no error, no mistaking the true method of philosophy and no "blunder as to the value of the objects of knowledge."⁸

Nevertheless, the philosophic search for truth must not be abandoned because of its weaknesses and its abuses. Thornwell would have been the last to come to that conclusion. His own philosophizings evidence a conviction that a sound philosophy, as described above, can be constructed.

II. Logic

In his writings as well as in his thinking generally, Thornwell was intensely logical. Toward the end of his life he wrote: "I have paid some little attention to logic. . . . I have dipped into Aristotle and several other masters in the science, and have, probably, the largest collection of works on the subject to be found in any private library in the whole country."⁹ One of the books Thornwell published met a criticism by Charles Hodge in The Princeton Review that it included a "profusion of the mere technicalities of logic."¹⁰ In 1857

⁸
Ibid., i, 621-622, 617.

⁹
Ibid., iv, 232, 266.

¹⁰
Charles Hodge, "Thornwell on the Apocrypha", The Princeton Review, vol. xvii, no. 2 (April, 1845), p. 269.

Thornwell wrote: "We are gratified to note the increasing interest with which the study of logic is regarded in this country."¹¹ Thornwell, at that time, expressed his purpose to write something on the science of logic but he never did.

In general he adopted the system of Aristotelian logic. He was familiar with John Stuart Mill's System of Logic (1843) and with Richard Whately's Elements of Logic (1826).

III. Epistemology

The problem of knowledge is a central one for the school of Scottish realism. Reid first formulated this type of philosophy in an effort to counteract Hume's skepticism by affirming the reality of what we know. At the same time, he tried to restrain the idealist's tendency to claim for himself unconditioned knowledge by pointing to the limitations of all human knowledge. The ground upon which Reid based this twofold approach was that of consciousness or, as he put it, "common sense."¹² Stewart maintained the essentials of the system while asserting that all that is known of the real world is its attributes; its substance remains unknown. Hamilton represented an effort to mingle Kantian and Scottish elements in

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J. H. Thornwell, "Reviews", Southern Quarterly Review, N. S., vol. ii, no. 2 (February, 1857), p. 470.

¹²

J. M'Cosh, The Scottish Philosophy, p. 454. Andrew Seth, Scottish Philosophy, pp. 148-149.

epistemology as he examined the nature and functioning of consciousness.¹³ Thornwell reflected this line of development in Scottish philosophy in his treatment of the problem of human knowledge.

"Sir William Hamilton," he wrote, "has justly observed that 'philosophy proper is principally and primarily the science of knowledge; its first and most important problem being to determine, What can we know?'"¹⁴ This question Thornwell considered fundamental both for philosophy and for its bearing upon the great religion queries: "What is God? What vouchers have we for the objective certainty of His being? What kind of intercourse can be maintained betwixt Him and His creatures? These are questions which will be variously answered according to varying views of the nature and extent of human knowledge, and the offices and operations of the human faculties."¹⁵

The Definition of and Elements in Knowledge. Knowledge in the abstract has no real existence. Only objects, subjects, relations and propositions are known. The term knowledge is one which designates the relation by which truths become accessible to some mind. There is, as Aristotle implied, a natural contiguity betwixt truths and the structure of the mind as light to the eye and sounds to the ear. The rational faculties

¹³ A. Seth, op. cit., p. 153. John Veitch, Hamilton, p. 25.

¹⁴ Collected Writings, iii, 79.

¹⁵ Ibid., iii, 146.

of man point to truth as their appropriate function. God has made us cognitive beings. We are obliged to regard the pursuit of truth as a part of the law of our beings. Truth is a food¹⁶ which the soul digests.

Thornwell's theory of knowledge did not include innate ideas in the sense of formed and evolved propositions. "So far as any objective reality is concerned, (as Locke said,) the child is born with a mind perfectly blank. Consciousness is dormant until experience awakens it by the presentation of an object. But though destitute of formed knowledge, the mind has capacities which are governed by laws that constitute the conditions of intelligence. Under the guidance of these laws it comes to know, and whatever knowledge it obtains in obedience to them is natural."¹⁷

Hence, in knowledge there are two elements, the object known and the subject which knows. The subject is a mind or a consciousness. The mind is capable of receiving from outside itself as well as from within itself "presentations" or impressions. These it may receive as being either true or erroneous; the criteria used in judgment of impressions are the laws of its own being. Reasoning is the process whereby the mind tests the impressions it receives by the laws of thought.

Subjects who know, Thornwell insisted, are obliged to trust

¹⁶ Ibid., ii, 479-481; i, 116.

¹⁷ Ibid., i, 72.

the authenticity of consciousness. Consciousness assures us of our own existence as thinking subjects, and of the existence of another world of being outside ourselves. To distrust the verity of consciousness is to be reduced to utter skepticism. Nor, for that matter, is it possible to distrust sense perception or the "common sense", intuitive, evident conclusions of the mind. To do so is to accept the fate of perpetual ignorance. "The indispensable condition of all knowledge is the veracity of consciousness. We have the same guarantee for the sensible phenomena which are out of the analogy of experience as for those phenomena from which that experience has been developed."¹⁸

As to objects of knowledge, whatever is, and at the same time is adapted to our cognitive faculties, is capable of being known. There are things not adapted for the knowledge of man. Of these he must remain ignorant unless they are revealed to him by testimony; that is, by revelation. Where objects stand in the proper relation to the mind, knowledge must take place. "If an object be visible, and is placed before the eye in a sound and healthful condition of the organ, it must be seen; if a sound exist, and is in the right relation to the ear, it must be heard."¹⁹

(1) Sense Perception. "Intuition" or sense perception gives

¹⁸
Ibid., iii, 255-256; i, 127.

¹⁹
Ibid., iii, 254.

knowledge of very few objects. It is limited to a narrow sphere; but the materials which it does embrace give us the constituents of all the beings we are capable of conceiving. The "understanding" or reflective and logical reasoning, impelled to action in the first instance by the sense perception of realities, goes forward in obedience to the laws of thought, and infers a multitude of beings lying beyond the range of sense perception, some like those that have been given, others possessed of the same elementary qualities in different degrees and proportions.²⁰

(2) Reason. By reason Thornwell meant a faculty of the mind; he also used the word as a collective expression for "common sense", the principles which, with or without proof, men acknowledge to be true. This double use of the term is confusing in Thornwell's writings. He disclaimed all originality for the usage, referring to it as having been formulated and followed by both Locke and Witsius.²¹ He claimed that this twofold definition of reason guards against the errors alike of Idealists and of Transcendentalists. The mistake of the former, he stated, is to minimize the role of sense perception in reason's function as a faculty of mind; that of the Transcendentalists, to deny reason as "a source of ideas to

²⁰ Ibid., iii, 117.

²¹ Ibid., iii, 185.

22
 itself." Reason's function both as faculty and as a body of common sense ideas is that of supplementing the defects of sense perception. Consciousness is limited by time and by space. Conceiving, induction and inference are all instruments of knowing. It is granted that knowledge which is intuitive and immediate is the highest form of knowledge but it belongs only to the omnipresent God. He alone is uncircumscribed in His being and so can embrace in a single glance of unerring intuition all things. Creatures, from the very limitation implied in being creatures, can never dispense with the faculties of mediate and representative cognition.²³

Thornwell wrote that to him it was almost intuitively obvious that reason is the preëminent organ of human knowledge. Intuition gives the alphabet; reason combines and arranges the letters, in conformity with the necessary laws of thought, into words. Intuition is the insect's eye, contracted to a small portion of space and a smaller fragment of things; reason is the telescope, which embraces within its field the limitless expanse of worlds.²⁴

(3) The Laws of Thought. Thornwell held that all schools of philosophy under one name or another, with the exception of the

²²
Ibid., iii, 218.

²³
Ibid., iii, 143.

²⁴
Ibid., iii, 118.

Sensationalists who identify the reception of ideas with know-²⁵ing, acknowledge the existence of conditions of human thought. These principles are not given by experience but are original and elementary cognitions. They constitute the foundations and criteria of all knowledge. The schools of philosophy which acknowledge the existence of these principles are roughly classified into two divisions: the Rationalists who, disdaining the validity of any sense experience, find in these principles implicitly all that is worthy of the name of knowledge, and the Experientialists who discover in experience the source of "objects about which our faculties are conversant" and who make the principles but the regulations by which the faculties operate. The Rationalists aspire to a complete ontology; the latter school aspires only to know things as they are related to minds. Thornwell sympathized with the latter group. In a sweeping generalization, he concluded: "From Locke to Hamilton, English and Scotch philosophy has been for the most part a confession of human ignorance; from Leibnitz to Hegel, (Kant excepted) German philosophy has been for the most part an aspiration to omniscience."²⁶

Thornwell's "laws of thought" are somewhat like Kant's categories. There are and must be categories of thought as well as conditions in the object to make human knowledge possible.

²⁵
Ibid., iii, 82.

²⁶
Ibid., iii, 83, 84, 86.

Thinking is not an arbitrary process. The forms of cognition are inseparable from intelligence. They are those conditions by which a limited and finite creature is able to stretch his awareness beyond his spatio-temporal existence. In viewing the laws of thought as definite aids to human knowledge, Thornwell explicitly differed from Kant. The laws of thought he considered adjusted to objective reality. What is true of a correctly formed conception is true of the thing represented. The very formation of a conception implies that it is a conception of something real which either has been given or, under certain circumstances, might be given in experience. Sense perception gives intuitive knowledge of real objects. Intelligence, by means of conception and in accordance with the laws of thought, forms symbols of the objects sensibly perceived. Abstract reasoning deals only with symbols but these are symbols of realities. Kant's error, as Thornwell stated it, was a failure to observe that reason's symbols, though only symbols, are symbols of reality. In brief:

Perception gives us the external reality in those qualities which our faculties are capable of apprehending. We know it in itself, and as now and here existing. Conception, or rather imagination, is an act of the understanding [reason], producing an image or representation of the object; it seizes upon no material given from without; the immediate matter of its knowledge is its own act, and that act, from its very constitution, vicarious of something beyond itself.²⁷

²⁷ Ibid., iii, 121.

The laws of thought enable the mind, not to create, but to image, figure or represent; they enable it to think a thing which is not before it, but they do not enable it to invest the symbol with a single property which the object depicted does not possess. The mind as intelligent, and things as intelligible, are adapted to each other.

Just what these laws of thought or common sense principles are which make up reason and which constitute the limitations and criteria of all human knowledge, Thornwell does not state. In this he is like the Scottish philosophers whose points of view he followed. By inference at several points one may discover some of the principles which he thus considered. There are the notions of time and of space. Thornwell agreed with Kant that these are native notions of the mind and not generalizations from experience. As such they are the indispensable conditions of apprehending the time and space properties of matter. The notion of a timeless existence is itself utterly incomprehensible. Every finite being is conditioned, and conditioned both by time and space. An intelligible world of real substantive existences^{without} either temporal or spatial relations is altogether contradictory. Another principle is that of causation. Such is the constitution of our nature that when an effect is given a cause must be admitted.²⁸ In the field of speculation, for example, the mind seeks an extramundane cause.

It wants something to support the finite, and it never rests until the infinite is revealed to its faith. Kant admitted that causation was a category of thought but held that it was simply a principle of subjective regulation. Thornwell insisted that, on the contrary, every law of thought is also a law of existence; "intelligence would be a mere delusion if the fundamental law of reason were shut up within the limits of a rigorous subjectivity" such as Kant proposed.²⁹ "Take away the notion and the belief of cause, and the idea of a kosmos becomes absurd, and that of philosophy a palpable contradiction."³⁰ Other ideas of common sense reason, Thornwell indicated, are: the immortality of the soul, moral distinctions such as duty, right and wrong, punishment and reward, and the being of God as the great First Cause.³¹

(4) Error and the Laws of Thought. Error is the result of disobedience to the laws of thought -- the punishment of intellectual guilt. If the laws of thought were faithfully observed, error could be avoided.³² Depraved as sinful man is, however, he can never contemplate truth as he should; he must ever be fascinated by falsehoods, deluded by prejudice and tormented alike by doubts and by curiosity. Error, being infraction of intellectual law, can never be consistent with itself like

²⁹ Ibid., i, 57.

³⁰ Ibid., i, 63.

³¹ Ibid., i, 219

³² Ibid., iii, 134, 72.

truth is nor can it produce the same healthful mental results.

Reasoning is a process which, if carried on according to the laws of thought, will lead from the data of experience to fundamental ideas which are constitutive to the human mind.

"Hence," Thornwell wrote, "reasoning is only a method of as-
certaining what God (through creation) teaches; . . ."³⁴

Knowledge as experientially given is either immediate, when an object is apprehended in itself without relation to others, or mediate, when it is known or apprehended in and through its relations. Every simple idea, whether of qualities or not, in the first instance must have been received by an act of immediate cognition. Whatever has been experienced once can be represented in the mind by a notion which shall exactly correspond to the whole object of perception. "We can represent all the essence that we ever knew."³⁵ To affirm that conceptions do not truly mirror the original, as Kant does, is to invalidate the only conceivable process by which we can pass from the ideal to the actual. It is to deny the fidelity of our faculties. Thornwell repeatedly insisted upon the validity of human knowledge as a knowledge of realities.

(5) Introspection. This aspect of his theory of knowledge led him to defend introspection as a reliable philosophical

³³ Ibid., iii, 460-461. J. H. Thornwell, Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 10.

³⁴ Collected Writings, iii, 187.

³⁵ Ibid., iii, 104-105, 111, 113.

method. "Reflection is to psychology what observation and experiment are to physics."³⁶ It is simply an instrument through which knowledge is constructed from data, whether those be facts of sense perception or processes of reflective thought. All the faculties and operations of the mind can be made the objects of contemplation and of study. The mind is not only conscious but it is also conscious of itself as being conscious.

(6) Knowledge by Testimony. Testimony is as real a source of knowledge as experience. All that is capable of being known through the experience of any one human individual is capable of being known to others through the media of accredited testimony.³⁷ This avenue of human knowledge, Thornwell held, is one which was used by God in His revelations to the sons of men. This aspect of the epistemological problem is to be dealt with more fully in a subsequent part of this chapter.

(7) Human Knowledge as Relative and Limited. However emphatically Thornwell insisted upon the reality of things as they are known, he did not admit that things are wholly known to be what they are in themselves. It is at this point that he asserted the conditioned, relative and limited character of man's knowledge. This is partly a result of man's nature. He is a creature, dependent upon God for the very breath he breathes; he is a creature of time, here today and gone tomorrow; he is a

³⁶ Ibid., iii, 125, 126.

³⁷ Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. iv, no. 4 (April, 1851), p. 502.

creature of space, fixed in his place as an earth-being. "That all knowledge begins with the incomprehensible, and is bounded by the incomprehensible, is a truth," Thornwell wrote a friend, "The longer I live, and the more I think, the more profound is my conviction of human ignorance."³⁸ What man knows is not the nature and property of things, but his conceptions of the nature and properties of those things. All human knowledge must be phenomenal and relative. Knowledge is always that of finite minds or of finite matter. We can know only what is conditioned, what is relative. "Mind and Matter are to us but a twofold series of phenomena; as substances we know nothing of them."³⁹ Nothing is known concerning the essence of either mind or matter. Substance is an hypothesis made necessary by the principle that properties cannot exist without something in which to exist. In itself substance is unknown and unknowable to us save through its properties as mind or as matter.

(8) The Religious Aspects of Epistemology. In discussing sense perception and its reliability, Thornwell said that we believe the reports of our senses and the data of our consciousnesses because the constitution of our nature is such that we cannot do otherwise. When asked how we know that our faculties do not deceive us, we can only appeal to the moral character of

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B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 344. Collected Writings, i, 207, 205.

³⁹

Collected Writings, iii, 95-98; ii, 520.

God who, by creation, wrought these laws of belief into the
 very texture of our frames.⁴⁰ If this be true, then faith in
 God's existence is a means of knowledge. The distinction be-
 tween faith and knowledge is simply that the former is immedi-
 ate, being based upon God's revelation of Himself, while know-
 ledge, sense impression and reflective reasoning, is mediated
 by those laws which God, the Creator, impressed upon the human
 mental constitution.

This distinction was the basis of Thornwell's apologetic for
 the objective validity of miracles. They authenticate them-
 selves both to the sense perception of some individuals and to
 the mental constitutions of others who receive the testimony.
 Therefore, miracles cannot be doubted without making all know-
 ledge impossible.⁴¹

In Thornwell's epistemological theory there is no special
 faculty by which man can immediately know God. We know Him,
 and can know Him, only mediately. "The infinite is never appre-
 hended in itself; it is only known in the manifestations of it
 contained in the finite."⁴² We know that it is, but we know
 not what it is. The matter of our thought, in representing the
 Divine perfections, is taken from the phenomena of human con-
 sciousness. "The knowledge in this case is precisely analogous

⁴⁰
Ibid., iii, 157.

⁴¹
Ibid., iii, 499.

⁴²
Ibid., i, 123; iii, 152.

to that of the external world. . . . We are not directly conscious of its existence, but are conscious of effects . . . , which the constitution of our nature determines us to refer to outward and independent realities."⁴³

For Thornwell the mind of man is an amazing phenomenon of God's creation. It is a more wonderful element of his constitution than is his body. Unlike the body the mind may grow and improve without receiving any additions to its substance. The intercommunion capacity of minds makes possible such social and moral unions as the Family, the Church and the State. He viewed the mind and its activities at the base of a value hierarchy.

Spiritual energy is one, but it includes every lower intellectual and moral energy. To explain: We have one form of mental energy in the mere assent to truth; this is the lowest exercise of reason. Then we have another form of mental activity in the perception of the beautiful. Here there is combined with assent a feeling or an emotion. The combination is what we mean by the sense of the beautiful. So in the sense of duty or obligation there is also an intellectual and an emotional element, but they constitute one energy. In the religious life we have a combination of the purely intellectual, the aesthetic, and the moral into a still higher energy; . . .⁴⁴

Thornwell felt that immortality would bring for saints and sinners alike release from limitations of the human mind as we know it. This release was to be a blessing for the saints and a terror for the sinners. Whereas here the mind works by leaps and starts, there the mind is to work at full capacity all the

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Ibid., iii, 108.

⁴⁴

Ibid., ii, 51-52.

time. Secondly, in this world concentration, by which the saints may exclude memories of their sins and sinners influences of their better natures, is possible; in the next world, for saints and for sinners alike nothing will be forgotten, all incidents of sin in past history will be present in the mind of man as if they had taken place simultaneously.⁴⁵

Thornwell's epistemology, like that of the school from which he drew its major tenets, was directed both against absolute idealism and against skepticism. The thesis that what we know is true in spite of the fact that we do not know all that is true was directed against skepticism. For the epistemological conceptions of the idealists and those of the rationalists, Thornwell had no use. "Whoever," he said, "would seek to penetrate into properties of things to which our faculties are not adjusted, overlooks a fundamental condition of the possibility of knowledge and his conclusions are entitled to no more respect than the speculations of a blind man upon colours or a deaf man upon sounds."⁴⁶ All knowledge is relative in its nature and phenomenal in its objects. The rationalist authoritatively pronounces that there can be no intelligible reality beyond the domain of human consciousness. Upon his principles, there can be no transactions between man and God the results of which are not known in advance by man. According to rationalist thought

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1, 413-414.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11, 497.

God cannot do with and in His world what He will and when He will; all that He can do must be known by man in advance.

"Rationalism, in other words," Thornwell concluded, "if maintained as a logical necessity, subverts the first principles of Theism."⁴⁷

Yet, as has been indicated, Thornwell held a high regard for reason. "Rational beings are bound to regulate their faith by the laws of evidence. They are not to believe without just proof. They must give a reason for the faith that is in them."⁴⁸

IV. Revelation

According to Thornwell's epistemology, the nature of man's mind leads him, through his common sense, to posit the existence and something of the character of God. "The constitution of man's nature is a finite symbol of what the Divine nature is as far as man can know that nature."⁴⁹ But however much the light shines around and within them, men as sinners and depraved may shroud themselves in darkness. This possibility, he seemed to feel, is that condition of man as fallen which makes revelation necessary. In other connections Thornwell insisted that it is

⁴⁷ Ibid., i, 46.

⁴⁸ Ibid., i, 100.

⁴⁹ Ibid., i, 126.

also the nature of God's plan of salvation which renders revelation necessary. Such conceptions as incarnation, atonement and redemption are matters which human reason unassisted could never bring forth. "They must be known by a Divine testimony, or they cannot be known at all."⁵⁰ To Thornwell there was nothing incredible about God giving a revelation of truth. There is nothing in the mode of Divine existence which precludes intercourse between God and His creatures. Neither is there anything in the nature of the human understanding which places it beyond the reach of Divine regulation. There is no more absurdity in God's governing than in God's creating its powers. The central question is, "Whether or not God can stand to man in the attitude of a witness to truth."⁵¹ In his epistemology Thornwell provided for the reception of knowledge by testimony; all which can be known by any man, he said, can be received by other men by means of accredited testimony. If man can be a witness to truth, then surely God can.

Again, Thornwell asked, is it absurd to suppose that God can communicate, in writing or in some form, a perfect logical exposition of all the intuitions which, in every stage of its religious history, the human mind is capable of experiencing?⁵²

⁵⁰
Ibid., iii, 227; ii, 331.

⁵¹
Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. iv, no. 4 (April, 1851), p. 503.

⁵²
Collected Writings, iii, 38.

Since such a proposition obviously is not absurd, therefore such a means of revelation is a possibility. It was in this light that Thornwell considered the writings contained in the Bible.

Revelation may be considered in two ways, therefore, one as God communicating truths to men and the other as God witnessing to man of the truth contained in some writing. The former type of revelation is illustrated by the relations of God to the writers of Scriptures; the latter type by the way in which God in contemporary times, by the Holy Spirit, produces the faith within the individual that the Scriptures and their plan of redemption is true for him. "The Bible and the Spirit are therefore equally essential to a Protestant" theory of revelation.⁵³

As to the relation of reason to revelation, Thornwell held that reason's function depends upon the subject matter of revelation. Reason is competent to deal with moral truths although, because of man's depravity, it is not infallible. Reason is not capable of judging revelations of supernatural matters such as incarnation, redemption and resurrection; these matters the reason of man can but collect, compare and bring into unity. It can admire and illustrate the truths proclaimed. No revelation can be unintelligible; that would destroy the very condition under which alone it can be known and received as a revelation.

tion. A revelation may contain, as the Bible does contain, references to strictly natural matters such as facts of geography, history, social and political institutions, et. al.; in these matters reason may judge as it may possess the data necessary to do so. Thornwell admitted that a book may contain blunders in the sphere of the natural, and yet be from God. It is conceivable that God might leave men to themselves when touching upon subjects within the compass of their natural powers, and yet supernaturally guard them from error in all that transcends the sphere of experience. This, it will be noted, is a step toward the position of modern "higher criticism," a step in advance which, unfortunately, was counteracted by a theory Thornwell adopted later concerning the Bible as God's revelation. In sum: Reason has its part to play with all forms of revelation; even with supernatural truths reason has a function "for faith is only reason enlightened and rectified
⁵⁴
by grace."

Thornwell accepted the Bible as a Divine revelation. The authority of the Bible as God's Word is a Protestant principle which was an integral part of the Presbyterianism Thornwell maintained. His pious Baptist mother may well have begun his high regard for the Scriptures. In college Thornwell studied both Hebrew and Greek. In graduate work he wished to acquire some learning in Syriac and Aramaic but failed to discover a teacher. In his writings there is revealed a certain familiar-

ity with the early schools of German higher criticism. He mentioned such names as Delitzsch, Eichhorn, Paulus, Schleiermacher and Strauss. Despite this background, his attitude toward the Bible was a remarkably simple one.

Inspiration Thornwell considered as the sending of men with a testimony from God. How God inspired men, and how much the mental powers of those men were involved are simply curious questions to which the Bible gives no answers. The fact that their authors were moved by God to write constitutes the authority of the Scriptures. "Any hypothesis which sets aside a Divine testimony to every statement and doctrine of the Bible is inconsistent with the exercise of that faith which the Scriptures exact, and which is the only adequate foundation of infallible assurance. . . . Hence, the theory of 'verbal dictation' . . . is the only theory which we have ever regarded as consistent with the exigencies of the case, the only theory which makes the Bible what it professes to be, the Word of God, and an adequate and perfect measure of our faith."⁵⁵

Two difficulties in accepting the Old Testament as verbally inspired were recognized. One was its defective morality. Thornwell dismissed this argument as being based upon negative examples and upon indications of progress in moral sensitivity. The other difficulty, frequently pointed out by the Deists, was the inconsistencies between passages in the Old Testament.

Thornwell rejected this with the statement that they were ex-

ploded cavils of infidelity which had been refuted a thousand times. In support of the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament there are two considerations. First, the Jewish Church accepted the books as Divinely inspired. Secondly, Christ, as a loyal member of that Church, accepted them as the Word of God.

As to the verbal inspiration of the New Testament, Thornwell made two claims. First, Christ on several occasions promised the Holy Spirit's guidance to the Apostles whenever they should be called upon to testify for Him. The writings of the Epistles and the Gospels Thornwell considered instances of such Divinely guided testimony. Secondly, the Apostles viewed their own writings as bearing the same authority as did their verbal instruction. Since they were personally trained by Christ, their instructions, written and verbal, must have been inspired. Prior to the Civil War few American Protestant thinkers took the challenge of higher criticism seriously.

Throughout Thornwell's writings the Bible was made the touchstone for every subject whether it be metaphysics, epistemology, ecclesiology or social ethics. He spoke for himself perhaps more truly than he knew when he wrote: "The Word and Oracle of God (the Bible) is our only source of information."⁵⁷ "The Word of God is truth, and . we are bound to receive all that it contains on the authority of its Author, independently of all other considerations. We are neither to question nor to

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Ibid., iii, 217.

doubt, but simply to interpret and believe. Philosophy and prejudice and everything else are to yield to the voice of God speaking in His Word."⁵⁸ Not only is this conception, but even the very words are strikingly like those of Karl Barth.

Thornwell's activity in defending the Bible came after the period in which "Tom" Paine's influence had been rampant throughout this country. In deference to the "Deist" and "infidel" attacks upon Scriptures, Thornwell admitted that there might be errors in those parts of Scripture which pertain to human affairs such as geography, politics, customs and manners. These errors affect, he thought, only the costume and not the substance of revelation. "Christ crucified is its great subject; it is the knowledge of Him that saves the soul."⁵⁹ During this time fears were rising in some quarters about the effect of science upon the credibility of the Bible. Thornwell keenly observed that it was the philosophizings of publicity seeking scientists rather than the findings of scientific investigation itself which endangered religious belief. "Christianity," said he "has nothing to fear from true science."⁶⁰ Those who Thornwell felt would make the most telling attack upon the Bible in

58

Ibid., ii, 108.

59

Ibid., iii, 197-198. John Wilkinson, A Biblical Nomenclature etc., 1820, p. 1.

60

Collected Writings, iii, 220.

in his day were the rationalists who sought to replace the authority of the Bible in Christian faith with the authority of group intuition or of personal inspiration. Once the authority of the Bible was destroyed, he said, it would not take long to destroy Christianity itself. Concerning the rationalists' doctrines of atonement and redemption, he stated: "We want no better illustration of what is likely to become of our religion when we give up an external standard."⁶¹ Both rationalism, and heathenism, as represented by the Geeta or the Ramayuna of Valmeeki, "teach us . . . that, in relation to theology, the real issue is between the Bible and a wild imagination . . . between the Bible, in other words, and Atheism."⁶²

V. Metaphysics

Thornwell held that the metaphysical entity of which we are most immediately aware is the self. Awareness, consciousness and knowledge of anything implies awareness, consciousness and knowledge of the self as aware, conscious and knowing. The terms self, spirit, soul and mind he seems to have used as designating the same metaphysical entity in varying manifestations. The self is not known per se but its existence is a necessary

⁶¹
Ibid., iii, 26.

⁶²
Ibid., iii, 27.

postulate. The self consists of "that unknown substance denominated spirit -- unknown, but yet believed by virtue of the very constitution of our nature."⁶³

Every instance of knowledge is the affirmation not only of a self but also of a something which is not-self. There is a subject knowing, and an object known. A man believes his own existence only in believing the existence of something that is distinct from himself. While affirming that our knowledge of metaphysical entities other than ourselves is both phenomenal and relative, Thornwell insisted that this knowledge is not a dream or a mere appearance. The mind is capable of distinguishing by its own laws between dreams and realities. Hence a phenomenal or a relative is none the less a real knowledge; it is the knowledge of a real existence as that existence is manifested to us. The existence is independent of us; the manifestation is in and through the relation of the object to our consciousness.

Phenomena received from objects in the external world are clearly of two different sorts, material and mental. Thornwell never said whether these distinctly different phenomena are attributes of one essential substance or of two. According to his epistemology, that question was impossible to answer since man knows substance only through attributes and not in and of itself. "The broad and impassable distinction between mind and

matter, between a person and a thing is that the one knows and knows that it knows, while the other is only an object to be known. The one has a free activity, the other moves only as it is moved. The one acts, the other is acted upon."⁶⁴

Man is a compound being. He has a soul as well as a body. The soul is an immortal essence. It is also called spirit. It is the soul of man which constitutes his dignity; this is the part of his nature which was formed in the image of God. The particulars of this image are knowledge, righteousness, holiness, intellect, rectitude of heart and universal soundness. "Our bodies belong to us, but are not ourselves. We use them, and act through them and by means of them . . . but (they) have not a single characteristic of personality."⁶⁵ Personality applies only to the spiritual side of man's nature.

In his insistence upon the primacy of the self as a metaphysical entity, Thornwell followed the thought of Henry and of the Scottish school in general. In denying to man's body any relation to his spirit other than instrumental, a reaction was manifested to the Priestleyan materialism maintained by Thomas Cooper.⁶⁶

64

Ibid., i, 181.

65

Ibid., i, 498, 613-614.

66

Ibid., i, 177. In another connection Thornwell attempted a refutation of this type of materialism by asserting that it denied the Biblical doctrine of the spirituality or personality of God.

As to the metaphysical status of the external world, Thornwell affirmed the necessity of "believing" in its reality. This belief is made necessary, he held, because of the nature of man as a dependent creature and because of the very constitution of his mind.⁶⁷ One of Thornwell's pupils wrote that since God has furnished us with our external senses and since our own bodies belong to the material creation, we cannot deny the objectivity of the external world without denying God's faithfulness with His creatures and without denying our consciousness of the reality of our own bodies.⁶⁸ Those elements employed by the mind in reasoning either directly or indirectly must be received from sense perception. The objectivity of the mind's results depends upon the objectivity of its data. The reality of the external world in both its material and mental phenomena cannot be doubted without doing injustice to man's nature as a psycho-physical organism or without denying the moral character of the Creator.

Thornwell's metaphysics was dependent upon his theory of creation. A denial of God's creation of the world permits no avoiding, as he saw it, "the philosophy of Spinoza or of Hegel Deny creation, and you can conceive of no higher existence of the world than as a thought of the Eternal Mind . . .

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J. H. Thornwell, The Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 8.

68

Enoch Pond, "Objections to German Transcendental Philosophy", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. iv, no. 3 (January, 1851), p. 336.

Postulate creation, and these eternal thoughts, . . . become realized in finite substances, which have a being, dependent to be sure, but still a being of their own.⁶⁹ There are three ways of considering the universe. 1. The universe is an organic whole which develops according to its own principles. This theory is not complete until you find the primary seminal principle in the universe's development; this cannot be anything but God and thus the theory is a form of creationism. 2. The universe is a complex whole of distinct parts held together by some species of cohesion. This is clearly the view resulting from a theory of creation since it is God's will which holds the parts of the universe in unity; thus a basis for the teleological and cosmological arguments for God's existence is given. 3. The universe is an absolute unit the nature of which determines its phenomena as if by logical necessity. Under such a view God can be only the essence and nature of the universe. This is the view of pantheism and of "the philosophy of the absolute." In this latter view neither the metaphysical entity of self nor that of material or mental substance is a possibility.⁷⁰

Thornwell's conceptions of the nature and functioning of the mind-side of the objects within the external world has been previously indicated. It remains here briefly to sketch his view

⁶⁹ Collected Writings, iii, 265.

⁷⁰ Ibid., i, 492-494.

of Nature in its material manifestations. Mind and matter were to him but a twofold series of phenomena; as substances we know nothing of them. Yet the objectivity of the existence of mind, of matter and of the infinite is a belief necessary in the higher forms of human life. Substance, which Thornwell termed "the unknown and unknowable support of properties," whether of mental or of material characteristics, "is not a matter of knowledge, but of belief; . . . We admit its existence, not because we know it, but because we are unable not to believe it."

71

There are three possible lines of speculation as to the character of substance. These Thornwell stated in opposition to the hypothesis advanced by the rationalists that substance is distinguished by a spontaneous activity of its own. 1. The Causalist posits an absolute commencement of substance with a development ordered by rigid natural laws and by cause and effect principles. 2. The "Fatalist" asserts an infinity of random movements by which things are what they are at any given moment simply through chance. 3. The Theist views substance as having a finite existence during which its development is governed by a series of happenings which, to some, may seem chance but which, to others, are the acts of God. Thornwell objected to the first two positions that they are alike inconceivable and self-contradictory. He made no effort to expand this statement further. The Theistic position is also incon-

ceivable but it is not self-contradictory and, therefore, he concluded, must be true. Within the bounds of time, nature and men are within a system of cause and effect but neither nature nor man present us with an instance of a real cause. It is for God alone to exercise the prerogative of Power in an absolute and unconditioned way.⁷²

What are called the laws of nature are only compendious expressions for uniformity and order in the phenomena around us. The principle of cause and effect is but the conjunction which we learn from experience between a physical cause and its effect, from which we can confidently predict that the effect will invariably follow the cause, or that the cause will invariably precede the effect. The laws of nature, therefore, possess no efficiency in themselves; they are simply uniform effects which the agency of God calls into being. Along with the principles of uniformity in nature, Thornwell observed contingency. Providence is so conducted that many of its events seem to be fortuitous. This ordering of affairs has its purpose. Were all events to follow in mechanical regularity according to principles which men can know, there would be a decided tendency either to humanism or to Atheism or to both. By contingency, however, "the mind is called off from the mere contemplation of physical causes to that sovereign Will which orders all things in heaven above and in earth beneath. Fortuitous events are so many monu-

ments of the Divine personality."⁷³

Thornwell adopted a hierarchical view of manifested life in nature and in man. Each level possesses characteristics of the levels below, together with characteristics peculiar to itself. The levels, as he indicated them, are roughly these: vegetable life, animal life, rational life, moral life and religious life. Religion is the highest form of life, the very perfection of spiritual nature. Although a strict and perfect unity in itself, religion reflects from its own nature the true light in which all lower forms of life must be viewed.⁷⁴ In the succeeding chapter a more complete exposition will be given of this form of life which Thornwell considered its highest created manifestation.

⁷³ Ibid., 11, 347, 348, 351.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1, 55-56.

Chapter III

Fundamental Features of Morality Religion and History

I. Ethics

1. The Nature and Function of Conscience
2. The Nature of Right and Wrong
3. Right Actions
4. Utilitarianism
5. Theism and Ethics
6. Aesthetics and Ethics

II. Religion

1. Definition and Nature of Religion
2. Nature and the Supernatural
3. Science and Religion
4. Comparative Religions
5. Certain Philosophical Approaches to Religion
6. The Elements of Religion: God, Man, the Religious Life.

III. History

Chapter III

I. Ethics

There is no department of philosophical inquiry to which Thornwell devoted more of his attention than to that of ethics. For almost twenty years from both lecture desk and pulpit he taught that subject to the students of South Carolina College. As Palmer put it: "In the one case, he laid bare the grounds of moral obligation, as these are implicitly contained in the nature of man; in the other, he stood outside of that nature, as the representative of the Divine authority, before whose supremacy the conscience of the creature is compelled instinctively to bow."¹

The two men under whom Thornwell pursued his own ethical training expounded opposing systems of ethical theory. Thomas Cooper followed closely the theories of Bentham as he had received them from his friend, Bentham's precursor in utilitarian

¹
B. M. Palmer, The Life and Letters of James H. Thornwell,
p. 392.

ethical thought, Joseph Priestley.² Robert Henry, as Thornwell claimed, taught a system of ethics which he had evolved from his studies under Brown's instruction and from Berkeley's writings. Society, Henry held, is the natural state of man. Moral distinctions are evolved from this state by rational processes. Conscience is merely an emotional sanction for the rationally discovered moral truths. This, in the main, was the general naturalistic approach to ethics presented by William Paley and by such Scottish ethical thinkers as Hutcheson, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. This type of thought was not uncommon either in the nation at large or in the South during the ante-bellum period.³ In 1837 Jasper Adams, president of Charleston College, published his Elements of Moral Philosophy, a textbook in Scottish realistic ethics.⁴ In 1856 Thornwell was president of South Carolina College and professor of Moral Philosophy. In that year a senior was awarded a medal for an essay on "The Connection of the Science of Criticism with Morals"; a similar medal was given a junior for an essay entitled, "Sir James Mackintosh's Theory of the Formation of Conscience."⁵ Thornwell's

² Wm. Sorley, A History of English Philosophy, p. 195. M. C. Yarborough, The Reminiscences of Wm. C. Preston, p. 59.

³ J. H. Thornwell, "Memoir on Dr. Henry," Southern Quarterly Review, 3d ser., vol. i, no. 1 (April, 1856), pp. 205-206.
L. L. Bernard, "The Historic Pattern of Sociology in the South," Social Forces, vol. xvi, no. 1 (November, 1938), p. 7.

⁴ J. Adams, Elements of Moral Philosophy, 1837. See p. 14.

⁵Catalogue of South Carolina College, 1855, p. 5.

ethical writings remained as parts of the required reading for students in ethics at South Carolina College for some years after his retirement from the institution.⁶

The outstanding single publication of Thornwell's career was his Discourses on Truth (1855). This work, published in New York, had a wide circulation and received much favorable comment. R. S. Gladney, reviewing the work for the Southern Presbyterian Review shortly after its publication, held it to be "the result of . profound and original thought . . especially valuable" in its insistence upon the necessity of religion as a basis for true ethical judgment.⁷ Thornwell sent Sir William Hamilton a copy of the work and received in return a letter in which Hamilton stated: "I have read them (the discourses) with great interest, and no less admiration."⁸ A posthumous review in the Southern Presbyterian Review of Thornwell's writings stated concerning the Discourses: "It is, really, a series of profound discussions touching the very foundations of truth and duty."⁹

⁶ Robert Barnwell, Jr., Manuel of References to Moral Philosophy, 1859, pp. 16, 42ff, 47-49.

⁷ R. S. Gladney, "Moral Philosophy", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. ix, no. 2 (July, 1855), p. 114.

⁸ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 379.

⁹ Thomas Peck, "Thornwell's Writings", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. xxix, no. 3 (July, 1878), p. 424.

Thornwell regarded ethics as of fundamental importance for he considered every act of will as leaving a permanent effect upon character. The ethical realm, however, is not limited to voluntary activity. There are within men three kinds of "springs of action" from different sources: those from the body, those from the mind and those from "the finer affections of the heart." In themselves these springs of action are neither virtuous or vicious. But the mode, measure and object or purpose of their manifestations in either thought or action come under the moral law. Thornwell expressly stated his regret that moral philosophers had so given their attention to the morality of men's acts that they had neglected the morality of men's spirits, tempers, motives and purposes. It is, he said, the doctrine of Scripture that the domain of morality extends to the whole nature of man. Indeed every moral act includes within itself in-¹⁰trinsically both motion and motive. For example, "the love of righteousness is indispensable to works of righteousness, and any acts, however just and proper in themselves, which have not been performed under the influence of this love, are destitute¹¹ of moral worth." Lying is not merely deception by word or by act but any indication whatever in contradiction to the thoughts, feelings or convictions of the mind of the deceiver.

"There are obviously three questions which every complete

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Collected Writings, i, 384; ii, 476-477, 478-479.

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Ibid., i, 395; ii, 540.

system of moral philosophy must undertake to answer," Thornwell wrote. "The first two questions exhaust the subject of theoretical morals; the last comprises the whole province of practical duty." "1. How we come to be possessed of the notions of right and wrong? -- whether by that faculty which perceives the distinction betwixt truth and falsehood (reason), or by a peculiar power of perception, which is incapable of further analysis (conscience)? 2. In what the distinctions betwixt right and wrong essentially consist? -- or what is the quality or qualities in consequence of which we pronounce some things to be right and others wrong? 3. What are the actions that are right, -- the things that must be done or avoided?"¹²

These three questions form the outline of this presentation of his own ethical theory.

(1) The Nature and Function of Conscience. That there is "a class of judgments and emotions, specifically different from all others which we denominate moral," that conscience exists, is "a matter of universal experience," "cannot be doubted," "and hence no philosophy has ever thought of calling (it) into question." But it is upon considerations of the nature and origin of conscience that philosophies split into sects.

All the possible answers may be reduced to three.
 1. . . conscience is the creature of prejudice, authority, custom and education . . there is no uniform law by which it is acquired, . . 2. [Conscience] is natural but not original . . a necessary product of nature, but not

as a primary gift of nature . . . an acquired faculty, . . . but acquired in obedience to laws of the human constitution. . . .¹³ . . . conscience is not only natural, but original . . . a simple element of our being, -- no analysis can resolve it into constituent principles, . . . its cognitions are primitive and necessary, and its sentiments peculiar and marked.¹³

Thornwell adopted the last named alternative. For him conscience was a simple element of our being and as such both natural and original. It is an integral part of mind and its deliverances a special form of cognition. These cognitions can be logically separated and distinguished into the perception of right, the sense of duty or obligation, and the conviction of merit or demerit. Yet in experience these concepts are but forms of expressing one and the same original deliverance of conscience. Apart from the capacities of conscience, there can be no moral sensitivities. If a man is destitute of conscience, reasoning will be utterly incompetent to put him in possession¹⁴ of the notions of right, duty and obligation.

There are two aspects of thought current in his time with respect to conscience concerning which Thornwell was apprehensive. The first was the slender hold which the idea of punitive justice had upon the public mind. "Moral order cannot be preserved without (this concept), and it is a fatal symptom that a nation is tending to anarchy when it becomes indifferent to

¹³ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ Collected Writings, i, 55, 68, 253-254; iii, 142.

the first principle of prosperity." The error arises from disregarding the "prospective principle" involved in the deliverances of conscience. The decisions of conscience are by no means final. They are only the preludes of a higher sentence to be pronounced by God in final judgment. No amount of temporal rewards and punishments can suffice to make the deliverances of conscience authoritative. In this Thornwell agreed with Kant that a conception of God is necessary to the most complete operation of man's moral nature. The second aspect of current thought in reference to conscience to which Thornwell objected is also connected with Kantian philosophy. Kant held that whereas intelligence based upon sense perceptions must be under suspicion, intellectual processes concerned with ethical judgments (conscience) must be trusted. He pointed to what seemed an inconsistency in this position. "If a man's nature is a lie in one respect, it may be a lie in the other." According to Thornwell, intelligence and conscience meet in the notion of responsibility. Either both must be true or they both must be false.

From the nature of conscience as outlined it follows that morality is a subject which falls within the province of natural reason. In this, Thornwell registered his protest against Bacon's position that all morality is supernatural. "The primitive

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Ibid., i, 411.

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Ibid., i, 68; ii, 241f.

cognitions of morality are like all other primitive cognitions. They exist, in the first instance, as necessities or laws of the conscience, and are evolved into distinct propositions by a process of reflection. Experience furnishes the occasions on which they are developed."¹⁷ With reference to these primitive moral cognitions, reason has a dual role: first, to make them explicit in consciousness and secondly, to apply the rules thus made explicit to actual situations which arise in experience. Conscience gives implicitly the elements of ethical judgment; reason in an explicit fashion gives the combination and uses of those elements. Conscience furnishes the criteria for, but not the knowledge of, what things are right. The reflective process of making explicit the principles implicit within the ethical nature of man constituted for Thornwell the work of moral philosophy. Paley errs in ignoring this positive function of conscience which must be recognized by moral philosophy. To say that we can have, from the dictates of conscience, only negative conceptions of rectitude is to contradict alike the testimony of Scriptures and the experience of mankind. A being without the sense of obligation and a spontaneous recognition of the fundamental differences of right and wrong could not be responsible.¹⁸

In the formation of ethical judgments, Thornwell posited two

¹⁷ Paley Review, pp. 47-48. Collected Writings, ii, 456f.

¹⁸ Collected Writings, ii, 456. Paley Review, pp. 38, 39.

factors: (1) the mind with its reception of impressions from the realm of experience and its analysis of these impressions according to its own fundamental principles and (2) the will which enters as a powerful element, and puts its own interpretation upon the appearances submitted to the intellect. Hence, in moral and religious subjects in particular a man understands as much by his affections as by his reason. Moral distinctions are the necessary offspring of the total personality.¹⁹ If the total self be depraved, as is the case with unredeemed man, ethical judgments will be blurred both by the inabilities of intellect and by the predominance in conduct of vitiated emotions and prejudices.

There are two respects in which every system of morality which fails to recognize in ethics a place for God is likely to be found wanting. (1) There are likely to be omissions or additions which distort either the comprehensiveness of the simplicity of the whole. (2) Even the true principles announced are apt to be applied in erroneous ways. "The Scriptures, as an authoritative rule of duty, guard against these defects."²⁰ They constitute a criterion by which the simplicity and comprehensiveness of the system may be judged; they afford a standard in contradiction to which no ethical action can stand. Thorn-

¹⁹ Collected Writings, ii, 491; iv, 365.

²⁰ Ibid., ii, 457-458.

well concluded:

The subject of morals is not above reason, considered in itself, apart from the consequences of the fall. If man had never sinned, his moral vision would always have been clear. His incapacity, in his present state, to frame a perfect system of duty does not pertain to nature, as such, but to nature as fallen and corrupt. It is an accidental and not an essential defect.²¹

Hence, duty is determined by our nature, not by our age. Increasing years, it is true, unfold new relations, develop larger capacities and thus may expand the circle of duty. But its nature does not change. A similar effect to that produced in the moral agent by maturity constitutes the distinctiveness of Christian ethics. "Christianity enlarges the field of morality by enlarging our knowledge of the moral relations into which our duties must ultimately be resolved."²²

Following Aristotle Thornwell affirmed that the regulation of ethical conduct is not dependent upon instinct. Neither is it wholly governed by rational processes. Yet the moral and intellectual natures of man are so intimately connected that errors in one department, say in conduct, are bound to produce errors in the other, in speculation for example. In discussing the nature of conscience Thornwell insisted upon the reality of what "Kant calls its categorical imperative."²³ This consti-

²¹
Ibid., iii, 207-208.

²²
Ibid., iii, 209, 211, 212; iv, 596.

²³
Ibid., ii, 484, 488. See also W. E. Gladstone, ed., Joseph Butler's Sermons (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897. 2 vols.), ii, 55.

tutes the element of judgment in conscience. He failed to recognize in the system of Butler the same characteristic as Kant's categorical imperative in the "authority" of conscience.

The moral law is applicable to the whole of a man's voluntary being. This being includes, however, not only conscious volition but also habits and dispositions which motivate conscious choices. This line of Thornwell's ethical theory is to be observed in his description of the good man: "He is upright whose temper of mind is in conformity with (the principles implicit in his nature), and whose prevailing disposition would always prompt him, in all the relations of life, to do what is right"²⁴ in so far as he knows that which is right.

(2) The Nature of Right and Wrong. Thornwell boldly asserted the objective existence of right and of good. "Moral distinctions are as immutable and as eternal as the ground upon which they rest, the nature of God."²⁵ As humanly known, right or the good is:

a simple idea, or, . . . an original intuition, which we are no more capable of explaining than we are of defining any other ultimate truth. It is the thing apprehended by reason in the operations of conscience, as the world or ourselves are apprehended in perception and consciousness. It is the fundamental datum of the moral understanding. . . . Conscience does not make the right, it only declares it; the right exists independently of it, as the world exists independently of our senses. . . . The right is a reality whether we perceive it or not, and when perceived,

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Collected Writings, i, 354; iv, 423.

²⁵

Ibid., i, 364; ii, 229.

as an absolute reality, a reality for all minds.

The right is perceived under manifold forms such as truth, justice, benevolence and temperance. Subjectively the only unity between the forms of right is that of a common perceiving consciousness; objectively the right and the good has its ground and unity in the very being of God. It is this absolute nature of right which determines obligation in the concrete issues of life. There never can be a duty, relative or absolute, to do a wrong thing; that would involve a contradiction in terms.

Conceiving of ethical distinctions as exclusively subjective in character Thornwell considered an error to be guarded against. That there is a subjective approbation of the right within the individual and that public opinion often gives to individuals proof of the existence of right and powerful sanctions for right conduct are facts which are acknowledged to be indications of the moral character of the Creator and instances of God's moral administration carried on in the present life. Neither the approbation of individuals nor the sanction of society, however, creates moral distinctions; these have an objective existence of their own in the very being of God. "Unless this . is maintained," Thornwell warned, "we annihilate the moral difference of actions. Everything will depend upon the motive; if that is good, the deed, no matter how disastrous or revolting, is to be accepted as right."

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²⁶ Ibid., i, 366; ii, 555.

²⁷ Ibid., i, 389, 404.

Yet in his discussions of practical ethics, Thornwell seems to involve himself in a contradiction to the position he so ardently advocated in theory. He seems to imply a relative character of ethical standards as they apply to the present life. "Good and evil, it should never be forgotten, are relative terms, and what may be good for one man may be an evil for another, or what is good at one time may be hurtful to the same individual at another. . . . We are not to judge of the institutions of the present by the standard of the future life; we are not to confound the absolute and the relative." This statement was made in a discussion of the ethical implications of slavery. He continued:

Slavery may stand in somewhat the same relation to political society, in a world like ours, in which mortality stands to the human body; . it may be as vain to think of extirpating it, as to think of giving man immortality upon earth. It may be, and perhaps is, in some of its forms, essential to an imperfect society; and it may be, and perhaps is, the purpose of God that it should be found among [some] men [at least], as long as the slime of the serpent is over the earth.²⁸

The only explanation which can be found in Thornwell's writings for this seeming inconsistency is discovered in these words: "depravity of the heart and the indulgence of corrupt and wicked passions not only give rise to false measures of truth but false applications of the true measures of good and evil. . . . The passions make out a false case, and hence a false judgment is necessarily rendered."²⁹ It must be remem-

²⁸ Ibid., iv, 421-422.

²⁹ Ibid., ii, 508.

bered that Thornwell, the son of a plantation manager who owned slaves, lived in the center of the slaveholding South all his life and, by inheritance through marriage, was himself a plantation owner and a master of slaves.³⁰

(3) Right Actions. Thornwell's treatment of specific ethical duties is not as comprehensive as that of other subjects in ethics. This can be said in spite of the fact that the purpose for which one of his major books, the Discourses on Truth, was written was to discuss problems in this area of thought. The explanation for this fact probably lies in the propensity of Thornwell's mind to deal in principles and in the abstract rather than with practical problems. Nevertheless he did announce certain principles in the field of practical ethics. One of these was that moral perfection does not depend upon the number or variety of single acts correctly performed, but upon general attitudes of mind which would lead to the performance of duties once those acts were recognized as obligatory.³¹ Another was that happiness, as Plato's Socrates pointed out, can never be gained by making pleasure the chief good; "wisdom, that is the highest perfection of our being, must be sought for itself -- it is the chief good -- "; happiness comes only as

³⁰ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 342.

³¹ Collected Writings, iv, 423.

a by-product of seeking this highest perfection of our being. In view of the perversity of sinful man, Thornwell expressed wonder that there is so little diversity in the practical judgments of men. This, he considered but another testimony to the universality of conscience as a body of innate principles which are "the anchors of the moral system of the world."³³ Diversities in practical judgment must be accounted for either by lack of development, as with the savage, by the intellectual incompetency of the individual or individuals involved, by the prevailing influence of passion, interest or selfishness or, finally, by the fact of social evolution. "These four considerations," he wrote, "seem to relieve the subject of all embarrassment, by accounting for whatever discrepancy prevails in the moral judgments of mankind, without prejudice to the universality of our primitive cognitions."³⁴

The phase of practical ethics which Thornwell developed most fully was the obligation connected with man's dealing with truth. Ethical thinkers, Thornwell claimed, often so emphasize the part of will in ethical action that they overlook the fact that "there may be a virtuous or vicious exercise of the understanding;" "man is responsible for his opinions as . . . for the motives which impel him to intellectual effort, and for the diligence, caution and attention by which he avails himself of

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Paley Review, p. 50.

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Ibid., p. 51.

all the means of arriving at truth."³⁵ The moral character of the man is really exhibited by his dealings with truth. Truth is obligatory on its own account. He who undertakes to signify to another, no matter what the form, is bound to signify according to the convictions of his own mind. The universal application of this principle would be the diffusion of universal confidence. "Why," Thornwell asked rhetorically, "am I bound to speak the truth? . . . Because it is the law of our nature; it is a fundamental datum of consciousness, a command of God impressed upon the moral structure of the soul."³⁶ It is only natural to fulfil the expectations we knowingly and voluntarily excite, but it is equally natural that in the use of signs to communicate ideas we should fairly and honestly represent the thoughts of our own minds. Thornwell, in discussing the nature of truth, claimed for it consistency. If one must seek only truth, it would seem that consistency would be produced thereby. Yet Thornwell insisted that there is an obligation connected with consistency in and of itself. Not that consistency is itself either a virtue or a vice. But constancy in the doing of the right and consistency in dealing ethically with truth form obligations. The obligation of consistency, then, "is only another name for the unceasing obligation of

³⁵ Collected Writings, ii, 492, 542; iii, 477.

³⁶ Ibid., ii, 528.

virtue."³⁷ In this use of the term, inconsistency is, thus, the result either of fickleness, weakness or hypocrisy all of which are wrong in themselves.

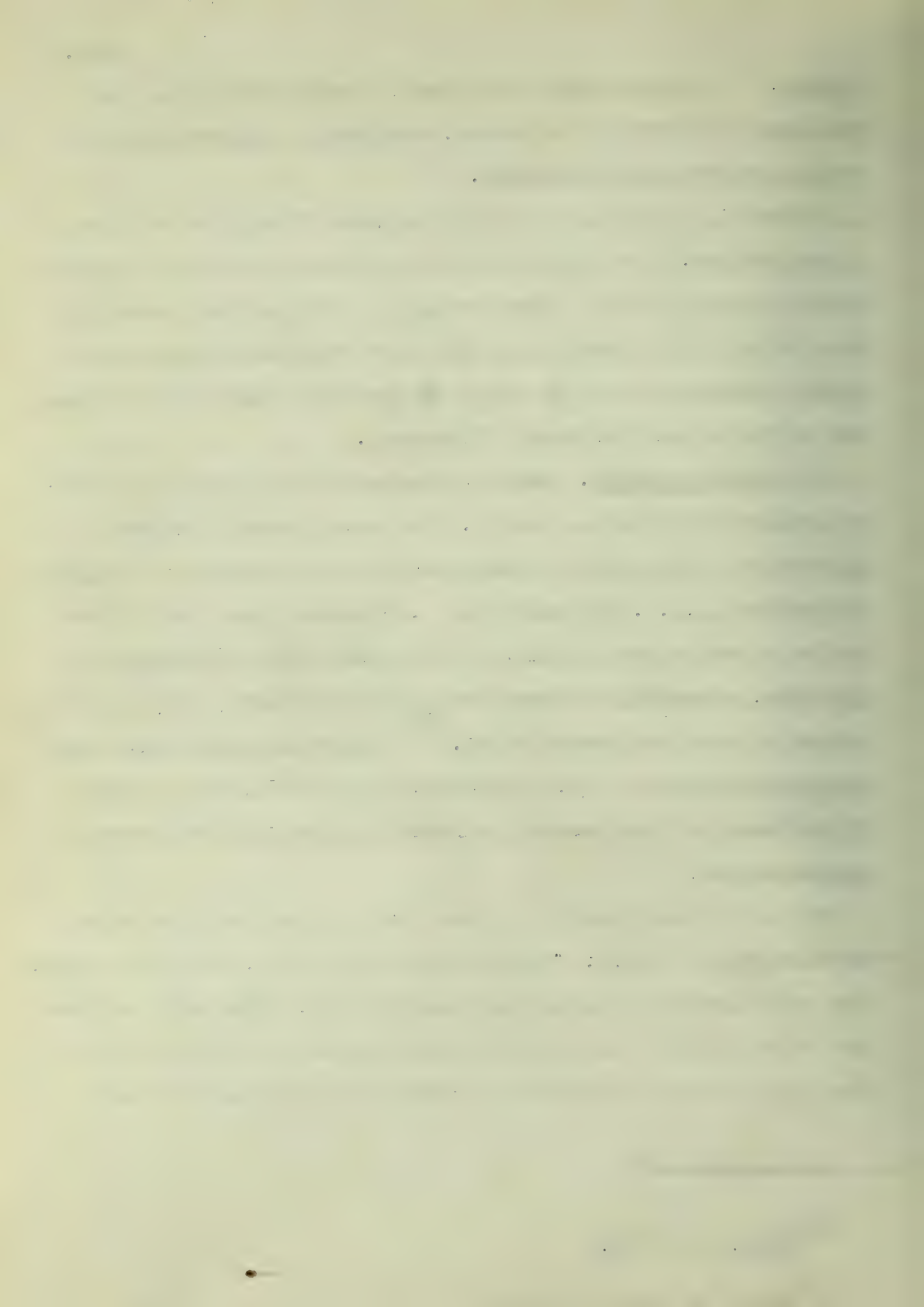
Thornwell lived in a day when much was being made of "the rights of man." He discussed this problem from his own aristocratic point of view. Consideration of this matter seems in this study to fall most naturally under the classification of social ethics and this is deferred from this point to the chapter on Social and Political Philosophy.

(4) Utilitarianism. Much of Thornwell's writing was directed against this ethical theory. "We would utterly protest against the principle that expediency is any measure of duty or obligation The position . . . proceeds upon a principle having a much closer affinity to the atheistic philosophy of Epicurus, especially as developed in modern times, than to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁸ The utilitarian principle made selfishness or sin, as Thornwell called it, the minister of holiness and the essence of rebellion the positive cause of righteousness.

It was William Paley's ethical theory which bore the brunt of Thornwell's attack. Concerning it, he wrote, "upon the whole, how much soever we respect the memory of Dr. Paley as a man, we are constrained to say that his book has no just pretensions to the title of Moral Philosophy, except in the sense that the-

³⁷ Ibid., ii, 595.

³⁸ Ibid., i, 397; iv, 167.



science of contradictories is one."³⁹ In the first place, its treatment of conscience as a tendency toward the search for pleasure falsifies the phenomena of our moral nature.⁴⁰ Secondly, in holding that happiness is the chief end of man it confounds the proposition that whatever is useful to the production of happiness is God's command for the proposition that "God . . . never wills anything that is essentially hurtful or prejudicial to the highest interest of his creatures,"⁴¹ Thirdly, Paley's theory confuses the statement that actions are right because God commands them for the statement that God commands actions as obligatory because they are right, that is, consonant with His character.⁴² Finally, utilitarianism makes "general happiness" the basis of utility and thereby the basis of duty, while it fails to explain how it is both that young children who do not conceive of "general happiness" have senses of duty and that animals who do seem to sense utility do not seem to possess a similar portion of moral sense.⁴³ It must be admitted that in the last point, Thornwell was guilty of playing upon words.

³⁹ Paley Review, p. 33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 19.

(5) Theism and Ethics. "So clear is the connection between God and our moral nature that we can never get quit of the notion of Him as a ruler until we have suppressed the voice of our consciences. . . . Apart from the existence of a personal God, it is impossible to construct a consistent scheme of moral philosophy."⁴⁴

Conscience as evidence of a universal moral law is an argument for God's existence which we carry about with us. The Word is nigh us, in our hearts and in our mouths. The highest ethical life for man is the highest development of his being. Thornwell described this as a life in which all actions, habits and dispositions will spring from a nature like unto that of God, a nature of holiness. This is a life which ethical principles alone cannot give; it must be imparted. The ethical man can know right but to him conscience must always be a terror. The religious man knows both right and good, for the supernatural illumination of the Spirit gives the vision of the beauty of good to him. Apart from that illumination the good cannot be seen. Illustrative of this blindness is the utilitarian with his worship of pleasure and Kant with his deification of duty. Both, Thornwell held, may prove productive means of making obedient slaves but neither can produce a holy man.⁴⁵

The basic connection between ethics and theism is God's right to the service of man and the complete dependence of man upon

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Collected Writings, 1, 505, 59.

⁴⁵

Ibid., 1, 371, 372, 272.

God. Dependence as being necessitates dependence as moral being. Thus man's highest ethical duty is a "supreme devotion in the will . . . to that (will) of the Creator . . . when there is not the slightest deviation of the former from the latter." The form this devotion must take is love for "love exhausts the whole sphere of duty, . . . everything commanded may be logically deduced from love."⁴⁶ Such an ethical life of love cannot exist for man apart from notions of God as both Creator and Redeemer. The very concept of obligation implies authority and command. This authority and command are not merely human. Conscience in its deliverances of duty has a prospective principle of rewards and of punishments based upon obedience or faithlessness to the commands given by authority. These sorts of rewards and of punishments are beyond man's powers. All sense of duty is ultimately founded in religion. Without religion, moral distinctions are but abstractions, conscience but animal instinct, caprice and convenience remain as the sole criteria of motivation. Apart from authoritative religious standards, such as the Bible, there is no means of invalidating the speculations of moral philosophy. Scriptures are necessary not as moral legislation but as sound general principles of practical ethics

against which the ethical speculations of men can be tested.⁴⁷

All moral philosophy must find its ultimate ground in God.

The distinctions of moral good and evil are a riddle, an enigma, an inexplicable mystery, if there is no God. "Take away God, and, considered in his ethical constitution, man becomes the sport and scandal of the universe. He is an enormous lie," and what he considers his highest destiny becomes the means of de-
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ceiving him.

Christianity, therefore, as a religion and as the preëminent religion of redemption, was for Thornwell the supreme basis for an ethic adequate to man's needs and to God's demands. Redemption "opens a new chapter in the book of Ethics;" the Bible by its doctrines gives answer to the ethical questions which have
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puzzled all ethical thinkers. The ethical efficacy of the Bible rests upon the fact that its doctrines are proclaimed with the authority of a revealed, living God.

In sum: The happiness of an intelligent and moral creature is the exercise of its own energies in God. God's scheme of redemption is directed toward the dual purpose of removing the judicial consequences of sin which, being present in the sinner, repel Him and of removing from the sinner those moral obstructions which repel him from God. Christ, as mediator, fulfils

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J. H. Thornwell, Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 18. Paley Review, p. 41.

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Collected Writings, i, 69.

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Ibid., ii, 462, 459.

this purpose of God. Apart from the Gospel of this reconciliation, there is not means "by which we can attain true integrity (and thereby happiness). In rejecting it . . . we are rejecting the very essence of virtue."⁵⁰ The first step in real moral improvement is faith in the Son of God as Savior. When that first step is taken, we begin to live; until then we are dead in trespasses and sins.

One can readily appreciate the effect this type of ethical theory must have had upon several generations of students who as citizens were largely to throw themselves into the vortex of the "Irrepressible Conflict."

Virtue becomes awful when it subordinates to itself the whole external world [as it does in being based upon the vows and promises of the Creator]. A good man struggling with the storms of fate, unshaken in his allegiance to God, and steady in his purpose never to be seduced into wrong, is the noblest spectacle which earth can present. There is something unutterably grand in the moral attitude of him who, with his eyes fixed upon the favour of God, rises superior to earth and hell, and amid the wrecks of a thousand barks around him steers his course with steadiness and peace.⁵¹

(6) Aesthetics and Ethics. It was no accident that Thornwell did not treat of the philosophical aspects of aesthetics. In the main, he considered himself aesthetically insensitive. After viewing the paintings at Windsor Castle in 1860, he wrote to his son that they were, he supposed, very fine but that he was no judge of art. During the same European tour Thornwell

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Ibid., ii, 474-475.

⁵¹

Ibid., ii, 553: the underlining is mine.

reported: "We spent last night at Fribourg, . . . and I was fool enough to go to the Cathedral, and hear the celebrated organ, . . . but I was so green that I could hardly keep from going to sleep."⁵²

In a consideration of aesthetics in religious worship, Thornwell revealed an almost Puritanical attitude: "I do not wish a fine church; . . . I want it like a gentleman's dress, free from criticism. . . . Fine houses, splendid organs, fashionable congregations, -- these seem to be the rage. It is not asked, what a man preaches; but where he preaches, and to whom. If he has an imposing building, adorned with sofas for the rich to lounge upon, where they are lulled into repose by an equally imposing orchestra, that is the place for a gentleman; and to go there twice a Sunday, is to worship God. This state of feeling, I am anxious to see thoroughly undermined, and broken up. . . . instrumental music . . . is getting to be a very great evil. Every church here (Charleston in 1850), I think, has an instrument of some kind, but mine and the Methodists. At any rate, there is a decided taste for them."⁵³ After attending a service in St. Peter's church in London during the summer of 1841, Thornwell wrote his wife concerning the ministerial vestments. "Their gowns seemed too much in their way; they were constantly shrugging their shoulders to keep these worthless

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B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 464, 453.

⁵³

Ibid., p. 352.

appendages from tumbling off."

In all his writings Thornwell made but slight reference to the subject of theoretical aesthetics. This statement is of significance in connection with his ethical thought.

The aesthetic sentiment should be regarded as a reflection from the moral sphere; a transfer to the sensational world of those perceptions which are found in their purity only in the region of the spiritual and divine. It is as nature and act imitate the harmony, loveliness and glory of the truly good, that they become the truly beautiful. The charms of sense are but feeble echoes of the higher music of the soul; the melody of sounds a faint echo of the higher bliss of the spirit. There is a first perfect and first fair; and these coincide with the first good [God], and from it [Him] must take their measures and significance. This supremacy of the moral sentiments must be maintained in order to give health and consistency to the pleasures of taste; they are apt to evaporate into a sickly and morbid sentimentalism unless braced and invigorated by clear, moral perceptions.⁵⁵

II. Religion

(1) Definition and Nature of Religion. Religion "consists of determinate states of consciousness, which can be logically discriminated as those of intelligence, emotion and will; . these states are conditioned by conscious relations to an outward object. There can be no religion without truth; there can be no religion without love; there can be no religion without

the spirit of obedience. There must, therefore, be something⁵⁶ (objective) acknowledged as supreme."

That is to say, man is the subject of religion and God the object. Thus, religion's doctrines, or theology, must rest upon God as "given", upon man as "given", and upon the relations between them as "given". Calvin was right in resolving true wisdom, the highest development of man's nature, as the Greek philosophers used the term, into the knowledge of God and of ourselves.

With reference to the idea of religion, there are two errors which must be avoided. The one is any disjunction of the states of consciousness so as to conceive of religious knowledge apart from religious emotion or the latter apart from religious will. The other error is the attempt to understand religion apart from its object. The knowledge of God as manifested, is the indispensable condition of all true religion.⁵⁷

Thornwell denied that religion was a simple thing exclusively confined to any one department of our nature which might be called "the religious sense", as conscience is termed a moral sense. There is no one faculty or group of faculties within man nor any object or group of objects with which man deals which are simply and exclusively religious. The unique character of religious thought and activity lies in the peculiar relations it proclaims

⁵⁶ Ibid., i, 39-40.

⁵⁷ Ibid., i, 41.

should and does exist between the faculties of the individual and between the objects with which he and others have to deal. Religion, in this sense, grows out of the relations between moral and intelligent creatures and their God. The objective elements involved are those of Divine administration: the law, the rewards and the dooms. Subjectively considered, religion is an attitude in which the whole man participates. God being the just and righteous Ruler, man must be the subject whether obedient or rebellious.⁵⁸

As such, religion is the true glory of man, the highest form of life of which he is capable, the capstone in his scale of values. Religion is the property of the race, its value is a matter of universal experience. Those who maintain and promote it find approbation of their conduct within themselves. Those who attack it realize that "he who should succeed in confounding its principles or extinguishing its sanctions would achieve a conquest which, if the extent of ruin is to be made the measure of renown, might satisfy the largest ambition."⁵⁹ "It is a marvellous phenomenon that men should be willing to relieve obscurity by infamy -- that rather than not be known, they will run the risk of everlasting damnation." "The design of the French philosophers was . . . to present (Christianity) in false lights." "Piety is denounced as superstition, humility reproached as mean-

⁵⁸ Ibid., iii, 164, 165.

⁵⁹ Ibid., ii, 513, 608.

ness, faith derided as enthusiasm, firmness despised as obstinacy, . joy in the Holy Ghost insulted as the offspring of spiritual pride." "It has been the trick of the profane in every age to deride pretensions to spiritual religion . . ."

(2) Nature and the Supernatural. For Thornwell the natural cannot be separated from the supernatural any more than religion can be separated from the rest of life. Both realms exist. The relation between them is as intimate as that between religion and philosophy; "no man can be an accomplished theologian, who is not, at the same time, an accomplished metaphysician, and . no man can be an accomplished metaphysician without imbibing principles which should lead him to religion."

Thornwell discussed the relations between the natural and the supernatural chiefly in his considerations of miracles and of revelation. In brief his thought with reference to revelation, previously treated more fully, is: There is nothing either in the nature of man or in the nature of God as we know it which would render communications between man and God impossible or absurd. The analogy by which we think of God as personal would

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Ibid., ii, 513-517. These passages are taken from an address delivered to the student body of that college the Deistically inclined Thomas Cooper had influenced by a man who occupied the chair, of Moral Philosophy and Evidences of Christianity, established with the avowed purpose of counteracting Cooperism in religious thought. E. L. Green, The History of the University of South Carolina, pp. 44-45.

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Collected Writings, iii, 228.

indicate that communication is as much a part of his nature as it is of His creatures'. Thornwell avoided the possibility of present-day revelations to man by God directly. In rather dogmatic fashion, it was asserted that man's knowledge of God comes by inference from His creation, from His Providence and by scrutiny of His accomplished revelation of His will in Scriptures. Immediate revelation took place only with the prophets and with the apostles. Mediate revelation through their writings constitutes our present heritage.⁶²

More must be said of Thornwell's position concerning miracles. He defined a miracle as: "a direct interposition of the will of some being who has power over nature, and in particular of a being whose will, having originally endowed all the causes with the powers by which they produce their effects, may well be supposed able to counteract them."⁶³ By definition he denied that any created being, whether seraph or devil, can work a real miracle and affirmed that this capacity is the exclusive prerogative of God.

The only power which any creature possesses over nature is power which results from the knowledge of, and consists in obedience to, her laws. Nature is what God made it, her laws what God appointed. No orders of finite intelligence, however exalted, can ever rise above nature, for they are all parts of it.

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Ibid., iii, 154-155.

⁶³

Ibid., iii, 258.

Nor can creatures accomplish a single result independently of the properties and laws which God has ordained. They can conquer only by obeying. Through superior knowledge they may effect combinations and invent machinery but they can never rise above, nor dispense with, the laws they have mastered. "The power which works a miracle is evidently creative; the same which first gave the universe its being, . . . It is the power of Omnipotence.

Hence, wherever there is a real miracle, there is and there must be the finger of God."

64

The specific character of the miracle is that it contradicts that course of nature which we expect to find uniform. It is an event either above, or opposed to secondary causes. To deny the possibility of miracles is to adopt a dead, mechanical view of the universe. Thornwell granted that, even though dependent upon God for its being and for the energy within it, Nature does have powers and consists of causes which, in the same circumstances, always produces the same effects. He insisted, however that

God has not left the world, as a watchmaker leaves his clock after he has wound it up, to pursue its course independently of an interference from Him. He is present in every part of His dominion; He pervades the powers which He has imparted to created substances by His ceaseless energy. He sustains their efficiency, and He regulates all the adjustments upon which their activity depends. He is the life of nature's life. In Him we live, and move, and have our being.⁶⁵

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Ibid., iii, 235.

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Ibid., iii, 230-231.

Thornwell acknowledged the wisdom of Aquinas' position concerning miracles that the miracle is against the order of nature, but not against the end of nature. The true point of view in which the miracle is to be considered is in its ethical relations. "If it can contribute to the furtherance of the ends for which man was made and nature ordained, . . . we have the same reason to admit it as to admit any other arrangement of benevolence and wisdom. We degrade ourselves and we degrade our Creator when we make the physical supreme, when we make the dead uniformity of matter more important than the life and health and vigour of the soul."

Thornwell briefly stated his attitude toward miracles in the form of a dilemma: "No miracles, no Christianity; the Bible must be accepted as it is, as out-and-out Divine, or wholly and absolutely rejected; . . . the ancient faith or open and avowed infidelity." ⁶⁶ That which motivated such a dilemma for him was a conviction that the Biblical miracles were God's seals of approval upon the authenticity of the truths revealed there concerning matters supernatural. To have a religion of authority, there must be an authenticated Word; there can be no authenticated Word without miracles to confirm its authenticity. "A religion of authority is the only bulwark against fanaticism on the one hand, and a dead naturalism on the other." "It is im-

⁶⁶ Ibid., iii, 273, 272.

⁶⁷ Ibid., iii, 222.

possible to abandon the miracle, and cling to any other Christianity but that which is enkindled in our own souls from the sparks of our own reason."⁶⁸

In upholding the literal authenticity of Biblical miracles, Thornwell felt himself to be defending authoritative, supernatural evangelical Christianity against both deism and rationalism. There is nothing, he asserted, in human consciousness or in what we know of the character of God which precludes miracles. The burden of proof is upon those who would attack Christianity at this point to show the impossibility of both revelation and miracles. Both revelation, as Divine truths, and miracles, as Divinely given credentials of those truths, must stand or both must fall; the objective and external authority of Christianity stands or falls with them.⁶⁹

(3) Science and Religion. It is a common fallacy that the rise of science did not become an object of concern to religious leaders until after the doctrine of evolution had become popular with the publication of Darwin's Origin of the Species in 1859. There were those during Thornwell's day who saw science as an enemy of religion. Since all the formal scientific training he had was pursued under the direction of the religious "heretic" Thomas Cooper, it is not a wholly unremarkable fact that Thornwell attempted to abate the fearfulness of science's attack upon religion. It was thirteen years after Cooper's resignation as

⁶⁸ Ibid., iii, 227, 250.

⁶⁹ Ibid., iii, 251.

professor of Chemistry and Geology at South Carolina College before the people of the state, through legislative action, would permit Geology again to be taught in that institution.⁷⁰ It is perhaps not without some significance that Geology was reinstated to the curriculum during a period when Thornwell was very close to the administration. In the spring following this event, March 1850, Louis Agassiz, Harvard's scientist-apologete for Genesis, lectured before the students and faculty of the college.⁷¹ Nine years later Thornwell was on the faculty of the Columbia Presbyterian seminary when "The Perkins Professorship of Natural Science in Connexion with Revelation" was established. The founding of such a professorship was without precedent in this country. Its aim was "to evince the harmony of science with the records of our faith, and to refute the objections of infidel naturalists." "Drs. J. H. Thornwell, Thomas Smyth, Jno. B. Adger, and others welcomed with delight this addition to the Seminary's course of instruction, not sharing at all in Dr. Dabney's fear that it would tend towards 'anti-Christian opinions.'⁷² Dr. James Woodrow, uncle of Woodrow Wilson, was the first incumbent of this chair. His procedure seems to have been simply to enunciate to his classes the scientific hypothesis supposed to be in conflict with Scriptures, then to expound the passages of Scripture involved in the matter only to leave it at

⁷⁰R. W. Gibbes, The Present Earth the Remains of a Former World, Columbia, 1849, p. 3.

⁷¹E. L. Green, op. cit., p. 53.

⁷²Marion W. Woodrow, Dr. James Woodrow, p. 13.

that point for, as he agreed with Thornwell, "the Bible statement must be accepted as the end of controversy, because the Bible was given for the very purpose of correcting the mistakes of reason."⁷³

Despite the traditional orthodoxy of this position, the influence of this chair must have been great. John Calvin McNair, who studied under both Woodrow and Thornwell, established a lectureship, still continued at the University of North Carolina on the relation between science and religion.⁷⁴

Although Thornwell recognized the tendency of physical science to make a god of the law of order, he felt that science constantly enlarges our knowledge of the wonderful adaptations of nature, thus widening the vision of God's wisdom in creation.⁷⁵ The researches of modern science, he claimed, "are rapidly exploding the prejudices which Pantheism on the one hand and a blind devotion to the supremacy of laws on the other, have created and upheld against all extraordinary interventions of God." Geologists once preached infidelity from their science but, "the earth can never turn traitor to its God, . its stones have already begun to cry out against those who attempted to extract from them a lesson of infidelity or Atheism."⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid., p. 43.

⁷⁴ Memorial Volume of the Semi-centennial of the (Columbia) Theological Seminary (Columbia, S. C.: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884.)

⁷⁵ Collected Writings, i, 61.

⁷⁶ Ibid., iii, 275-276.

In general, Thornwell seems to have had great confidence in the correctness of the Baconian scientific method whether it be applied to the realm of science, or to the realm of philosophy, or, indeed, to the realm of religion. This must have contributed to his belief that true science would never contradict religion for both deal with the activities and attributes of the same God.

(4) Comparative Religions. In his first presidential address to the graduates of South Carolina College, Thomas Cooper stated: "It is not sufficient in this present day, that (the young Christian minister) quit his theological course well versed in the peculiar opinions that characterize the sect of Christians to which he belongs."⁷⁷ Cooper indicated that the young theologian should know text and canon, the history of metaphysics and something of comparative religions. He noted the inadequate library facilities in most places for this sort of training.

In his writings Thornwell revealed a certain familiarity with the field of comparative religion. He criticized Mohammedanism as presenting no rational grounds of conviction. "Its great argument was the word of its Prophet, its decisive sanction the sword of its soldiers, and its strongest attraction the license which it gave to voluptuous indulgences."⁷⁸ Another passage reveals his having known something of the Hindu writings, the Geeta

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Thomas Cooper, Address, December, 1821, (Columbia, S. C.: Faust, 1821.), pp. 11-13.

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Collected Writings, iii, 184.

and the Ramayuna of Valmeeki. Theoretically, he held that it was incumbent upon Christians to exercise reason in testing, by means of the internal consistency and reasonableness of their natural parts, the validity of professed supernatural revelations. He complained, however:

It cannot be denied that it is the course actually adopted by the great majority of Christendom, who, in rejecting the corrupt systems of religion that obtain in the world, are not governed by the insufficiency and defects of the proof, but [by] the grossness of the doctrine and the looseness of the precepts , , , , , Few take the trouble, and none feel themselves bound, to examine the credentials of Rome, Mohammed or [Joseph] Smith.⁸⁰

The ultimate test of professed revelations for Christians, Thornwell well maintained, is whether it is consistent with the Bible; "the doctrine is the decisive test of spurious and true
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revelations."

In his treatment of Christian missions Thornwell used rather different terminology in referring to followers of non-Christian religions. These religions he denominated "heathenism." Its absurdities and monstrosities, its contradictions to reason and conscience, its violent perversions even of taste and decency can be considered only as the determined efforts of moral beings, cut loose from their Maker, to extinguish all right apprehensions

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Ibid., iii, 59

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Ibid., iii, 191.

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Ibid., iii, 193.

of His name. Hence he asserted of the "heathens", "Their condemnation is just." Their forms of worship are not crudities in the processes of evolution, nor the feeble and obscure utterances of childhood, nor the results of involuntary ignorance, but "stages of degradation which men have reached in their apostasy from God; . . . utterances of alienated hearts, the slanders of malignant and poisoned tongues."⁸² Creation and providence, and the structure and laws of their own souls, proclaim God's being, His attributes and His will; so that men are without excuse. They may be said to know God as possessing the germs of that knowledge in the constituent elements of reason. The real difficulty is their reluctance to glorify His name. Thornwell's missionary thought rested upon the question: "But are we free from their blood?" Answering the question in the negative, he stated what he considered to be the aim and purpose of Christian missions: "We have but to announce our Saviour's name, to spread the story of the Cross, and we open the door of hope We have but to erect the Cross, and the millions who are dying from the stings of the fiery serpent may look and live."⁸³ Although, by implication, this statement would prohibit all types of missionary activities save "evangelism", Thornwell was influential in making the southern Presbyterian church, in the founding of which his thought was dominant, outstanding for its promotion and support of all types of missionary activity.

⁸² Ibid., i, 327: the underlining is mine. See also ii, 429.

⁸³ Ibid., ii, 432-433, 447.

The distinction of Christianity considered as one religion among many, Thornwell indicated, is, as Lord Bacon held, that Christianity "attaches preeminent importance to truth, and acknowledges no faith but that which is founded in conviction.

. . . As a system proved to be divine (presumably by miracles),
⁸⁴
 it demands implicit submission."

(5) Certain Philosophical Approaches to Religion. The humanist, Thornwell wrote, is an artist who prints with the extravagance permitted to his artistry. Others beholding his work, however, become so enamoured of "the richness of the colouring and the beauty of the outline" that they are unwilling to recognize it as a painting, a representation of only part of the truth, and wish to accept it as reality itself rather than the delusion it is.
⁸⁵
 The error is that no allowance is made for human infirmity and weakness -- pure contemplation of the truth is not open to man on this earth; falsehoods fascinate, prejudices delude, doubts torment and curiosity remains unsatiated; virtue and vice, considered as "natural objects", as socially efficient or utilitarian, rise no higher than the realm of the natural, their source, and so fail to provide either moral or religious obligation. Humanist ethics resolves itself into atheism. If virtue has no attraction more than its own charm or its manifest utility, it is, thereby, a mere abstraction. Conscience becomes

⁸⁴
Ibid., iii, 183, 184.

⁸⁵
 J. H. Thornwell, Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 10, 11.

an animal urge on a plane with all other urges to be satisfied at the call of convenience or caprice. Its undermining the moral content of Christianity and its contradicting what he considered the moral character of man's nature, Thornwell judged to be humanism's condemnation of itself.

At the opposite extreme Thornwell viewed the Pantheists, a class of philosophers . . . who . . . profess to be very zealous for the Divine existence and perfections, whose poison is as insinuating as it is dangerous, . . . " ⁸⁶ Thornwell named Spinoza and Cousin in this connection and implied in his exposition that Kant should be considered as also tending in this direction. Thornwell objected to the Pantheistic theory: 1. It denies or overlooks creation. To do either is to be left with the philosophy of Spinoza or of Hegel as the only alternative. 2. It depicts the universe in poetic language rather than in terms corresponding with consciousness' dictates. 3. It reveals a most presumptuous spirit in that mere men claim their capacities are capable to declare to themselves and to all men the essential nature of being and thereby what must and what must not be. In denying the personality and efficacious will of God, in being untrue to the "common sense" principles of our being and in rebelling against the true position of man as a dependent creature, Pantheism reveals the folly of its own position.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

⁸⁷ Collected Writings, ii, 264, 265, 267, 268-269.

That philosophical approach to religion which Thornwell considered one of the worst forms of rationalism is the theology of Schleiermacher. This was taken up by Ritschl through whose writings it had widespread influence in this country until quite recently. As late as 1906 a leading American Calvinist, A. H. Strong, wrote:

Under the influence of Ritschl and his Kantian relativism, many of our preachers and teachers have swung off into a practical denial of Christ's deity and of his atonement. We seem upon the verge of a second Unitarian defection, . . . worse . . . than . . . that of Channing and Ware a century ago.⁸⁸

As Thornwell viewed it, this was a school of thought which agrees with the naturalist and mythical interpreters of the miraculous in the New Testament in rejecting everything supernatural and particularly the personal union of two natures in Christ and which yet undertakes to find a foundation in fact for a real atonement and for a real Christ. Rejecting alike the authority of the Church and the authority of the Bible, this theory claimed to find its source of authority in Christian consciousness, effects wrought in believers by connection and sympathy with the Christian community. "The feelings of believers are the sole standard of religious truth -- this is the Bible, the law and the testimony of Eclectic Rationalists," as Thornwell termed them. For this authority of the Christian consciousness, Thornwell stated to the students at South Carolina College, we are to give up the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection. "My

brethren shall we do it? Never, while there is a sin to be pardoned, a grave to be feared, a hell to be dreaded, a God to be met -- never! . . . Jesus and the resurrection I know; but to these speculatists and sophists I may ask -- who are ye?"⁸⁹

(6) The Elements of Religion. God. The objective existence of God was so firm a conviction on Thornwell's part that he found it difficult to deal with the rational proofs for God's existence. Of these in their classical forms, Thornwell acknowledged that Kant had demonstrated the delusion of the ontological argument. He agreed with Kant that the teleological argument was the strongest of this kind of apologies for God's existence. For himself, he wrote: "The attempt to prove the existence of matter, of an outward world, or our own souls, is simply absurd. They authenticate themselves."⁹⁰ Similarly, the existence of God is so nearly a self-evident truth that if we expect to find deep and profound arguments for it, we only confuse what is plain, and mystify ourselves with vain deceit. Man's urge to worship, to be dependent, to be responsible must have an object or else his nature is in itself a deception.⁹¹ The argument which produces doubt as to the existence of God brings with it doubt as to the existence of all substance, material and mental.

89

J. H. Thornwell, "Matt. XXII. 29", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. iv, no. 4 (April, 1851), p. 524.

90

Collected Writings, i, 53, 62, 107; ii, 429.

91

Ibid., i, 39.

Further, the Being of God has an antecedent credibility in that when granted, it is the means of making plain all other mysteries and when denied, it makes mysterious both the end and the beginning of all existence.⁹² The foremost basis of belief in the objective existence of God is an "intuitive knowledge" which "is an original element of intelligence, and particularly of conscience." It is due to willfulness and blindness that belief in God is not universal. True knowledge of God apart from revelation is made very nearly impossible. "To a man of weak vision a book is presented; he can see that there are characters, but he cannot distinguish them. You give him spectacles and he reads distinctly. Nature (objectively and subjectively) is such a book; man in his fallen state has weak eyes. Revelation is the spectacles."⁹³

In this connection Thornwell stated his convictions in the controversy between Victor Cousin and Sir William Hamilton in the Edinburgh Review of 1829 upon the subject of the Unconditioned Absolute.

We have always thought that in this celebrated controversy both parties were wrong and both were right. Cousin was wrong in vindicating to reason an absolute comprehension of the Godhead; and Sir William's refutation of this doctrine is triumphant and complete. Sir William was wrong in denying the reality of the infinite to be a positive affirmation of intelligence, and resolving the belief of it into an impotence of mind to realize either of two contradictory extremes, though accord-

⁹² Ibid., i, 53.

⁹³ Ibid., i, 599, 601, 602.

ing to the laws of thought one had to be accepted as necessary. Cousin was wrong in maintaining that the relations of the finite and infinite are eternal, necessary and fully intelligible; Sir William was wrong in maintaining that they are wholly and completely unknown. Cousin arrogated too much, Sir William too little, to intelligence. . . . Partial knowledge and partial ignorance are the mingled inheritance of man. Of the infinite we know that it is, though we know not what it is. God is essentially incomprehensible as He is inevitably apprehensible. . . . To say that God is wholly unknown, and wholly incapable of being known, is to annihilate the possibility of religion. . . . To bring the infinite within the sphere of the understanding is to limit, to define it; to think it as a term of a syllogism is to condition it. It becomes one among many . . . a science of the infinite [is] impossible. It implies a contradiction in terms. This most important principle, too much overlooked by divines, is pregnant with most important results in its bearing upon theological systems. It shows where we can reason and explain, and where we can only pause and adore. . . . There is in Theology a region which must be left to the dominion of faith; . . . a religion which has no mysteries is simply a religion that has no God.⁹⁴

As to God's nature, the most we are permitted to know is that He is a person and that we may maintain relations to Him analogous to those which subsist among men. He deals with us as persons, not as things, for we were formed in His image. Hence, the relation of justice as between responsible and conscious beings must always lie at the basis of the commerce between God and His human creatures.⁹⁵ This thought, that justice is basic to God's moral government of men, is central in Thornwell's theology.

Man. In a subsequent discussion of his theology, something of the character of man as sinner and as fallen is indicated.

It remains here but to outline man's essential nature. Man's dignity consists in his possession of reason, conscience, will, his capacity for immortal life and his earnest longings for the good life. "The constitution of man's nature is a finite symbol⁹⁶ of what the Divine nature is as far as man can know that nature." Thornwell made the general statement, true for all men, that "the interests of religion . . . must and will exact attention. Man is essentially a religious animal. His nature calls for religious worship. He must have a God to pray to, as well as a God to swear by, and while the true God is unknown, the heart will be filled with idols in His place."⁹⁷ Yet however great may be a man's dignity seen in comparison with that of other creatures observed about him, and however greatly man may fulfill the dignity of his nature through his mode of life, whether in this world or the next, man must forever remain, by his very nature, a dependent being. "To us," Thornwell wrote editorially, "the idea that any creature, in any of its operations, can be independent of God, involves a gross contradiction. Absolute⁹⁸ dependence is the law of its being."

It is the dignity of man as created upon which Thornwell based his rationale for man's immortality. Man's consciousness of his own mortality is a dark cloud which conceals a dignity in

⁹⁶ Ibid., i, 126-127. J. H. Thornwell, Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 27.

⁹⁷ Collected Writings, ii, 58.

⁹⁸ Ibid., ii, 74.

him which is not unworthy of God to bestow and which is man's highest interest to understand. Reason unassisted cannot reveal either man's immortality or the nature of his true dignity. The Word of God in revealing man as capable of immortality dissipates the vanity of mortal condition, vindicates the ways of God to man and unveils man in his true grandeur as made in the image of God. Salvation through Christ is the means by which men attain⁹⁹ their natural dignity.

By the term "knowledge" Plato indicated man's attaining to his natural dignity. In this sense of the term, Thornwell stated: "We believe that there is a necessary connection between immortality and knowledge." The ideas which our intelligence enables us to comprehend have their objective existence in the mind of God. As He comprehends those ideas and as they exist as parts of His eternal being, it is extremely credible that in giving man the capacity for ideas, He designed him for immortality also. The great practical principle which Plato through his character, Socrates, in the Phaedo was anxious to inculcate was, that we shall live hereafter in proportion as we die here, and¹⁰⁰ that we shall die hereafter in proportion as we live here. Thornwell pointed to the parallel doctrine of Christ that "he who loseth his life shall find it, and that he who finds it shall lose it." What both the Greek and the Christ were encouraging

was an immortality begun here by the amplitude of "eternal life," the vindication of the moral grandeur of man's soul through untiring pursuit of virtue and knowledge and through a search for the glory and honor of sons of God. Clearly Thornwell conceived the present life as a burden to be borne with fortitude in preparation for and in anticipation of a greater existence yet to come.

The Religious Life. The right relations between man as subject and God as object constituted for Thornwell "the life of religion." This is not confined to any one department of thought or feeling. "The whole man must acknowledge its influence; it thinks in the head, feels in the heart and acts in the will." 101 It is the religion of a moral creature under the dominion of a moral law. Body, soul and spirit, all are the organs of the Divine life. Such is Bible religion.

Objectively the life of religion expresses itself in worship. Religion necessarily supposes some species of communion with the object of worship, some sense of God. All worship involves a direct address of the creature to the Deity. Man must talk with God as well as obey His laws, must love and confide in Him as well as tremble before Him. Certain it is that the moral nature of man, which leads him to converse with God, has in all ages 102 induced him to hope and expect that God would converse with him.

101.

Collected Writings, iii, 176.

102

Ibid., iii, 252-253.

Worship consists not only in specifically devotional acts such as prayer, praise and thanksgiving, but also in every act motivated by the purpose to glorify God. "A cup of cold water given to the disciple in the name of a disciple is not simply charity; it is an offering acceptable to God."¹⁰³ The act takes its designation of religious or irreligious from its end. Even the taking of vows which, in the sense of the Roman Catholic usage, Thornwell deplored, he considered, when properly used for proper ends and on proper occasions, as an act of solemn religious worship and as eminently conducive to virtue.¹⁰⁴

The essence of the religious life in its subjective aspect consists of no single or group of acts, emotions or thoughts. Two emotions as distinct as hope and fear may yet both be religious. That state of mind described as spiritual life or holiness is the truly religious condition. This all pervading disposition within man to comply with the will of God is the nearest possible exposition of the subjective phenomena involved in the experience of religion. It is that state of mind to which, when men are exalted, they are said to be saved.¹⁰⁵ Socrates made philosophy, a bringing of the finite mind to the home of eternal verities, the highest activity of man. This, as Thornwell considered it, corresponds with the Scriptural representa-

¹⁰³ Ibid., ii, 571.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., ii, 582-583, 569.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., iii, 178, 177.

tions of religion, subjectively. "True piety is a life . . . the
 106
 energies of a new nature." Socrates made self-denial the indispensable condition of philosophy; Christ made the similar
 "crucifixion of the flesh" the indispensable condition of sal-
 107
 vation. The Christian plan of salvation "is a scheme through which, in conformity with the nature of moral government, man is recovered from his ruin and exalted to (the) condition" of holiness. Holiness, the highest activity of man's full and purified nature, is the immediate end of atonement and redemp-
 108
 tion. The nature of sin and its effects upon the religious life will be discussed in the chapter on theology. It must be noted here, however, that Thornwell considered any religious philosophy which denied the existence of evil or of sin as a positive element in life and as affecting man's highest form of
 109
 life as "a bastard liberality."

III, History

Thornwell wrote little explicitly upon history from a philosophical point of view: some implications concerning it will be noted in a later discussion of his social philosophy. His conception of the world of Nature, as the "stage" of history's action, has been discussed. Within this realm, under ordinary cir-

106
Plato's Phaedon, p. 420.

107
Ibid., p. 422.

108
Collected Writings, iii, 176.

cumstances, law and order prevails. Human life is made possible. Man may manipulate the elements of nature by the rearrangement of invention or by counteracting the effects of one series of natural principles by the effects of another principle or group of principles. To create new elements or to institute new laws is not his prerogative. His is but to discover and to manage. The nature and character of man, the actor in history, in the dignity of his essential being, has also been treated. As a moral being, possessed of capacities for the highest manifestations of created life, the life of religion, Thornwell considered man as the embodiment of the highest values within history, the image and symbol of God. His philosophical conceptions of God as Creator and Redeemer, as play-wright and director of history, have been indicated. God manifests the purposes for which He created, the moral government under which the play of history must go forward and the ultimate ethical judgment with rewards and punishments toward which history is ever moving.

History, being enacted by humans, even though under the guidance of and being subject to God, is limited to the realm of the temporal. "We (humans) are subject," Thornwell asserted, "to the law of time, and can think nothing apart from the relation of time. A duration which is not time is as completely beyond our conceptions as a place which is not space."¹¹⁰

History, then, takes place upon a temporal stage. Thornwell

was fond of referring to man's earthly life as "this sublunary state." Concerning it, he wrote:

We know that God has erected a moral government over men, and that this sublunary state, whatever other ends it may be designed to accomplish, is a theatre for human education and improvement. We cannot resist the impression that the earth was made for man, and not man for the earth. . . . This earth is a school in which God is training him for a higher and nobler state. . . . there is nothing which commends itself more strongly to the natural expectations of men than that He should teach His creatures what was necessary to their happiness according to the exigencies of their case.¹¹¹

History, as enacted upon the stage of earth by all the men and women who have ever lived or are yet to live by the will of God and under His Providential tutelage, has, according to Thornwell, an end outside itself. That end, therefore, must be outside of time in that realm we call eternity, about which we know nothing save through terms contradictory to our experience of time. Of the nature of the end of history we know little apart from revelation. We do know, however, that it is directed by God, that it is participated in by Him and that man's life is ordered in that end in a measure in accordance with the relations he has sustained to that moral government under which he has lived within the realm of temporal history. The horror which that end toward which history moves is a product of accompanies our anticipation of our consciences. These, with their prospective principles, spell out doom for those who are guilty of violating the divine law. The only joy with which that end can be contemplated is that which results from a con-

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Ibid., iii, 270: the underlining is mine.

sciousness of a Divinely granted pardon, -- the endangered soul of the sinner snatched from its rightful destiny of eternal torment and restored to the ranks of "God's own." Thornwell's ideas concerning how God initiates and carries out His redemptive purposes form part of his Christian theology, the subject of the succeeding chapter.

Chapter IV

Fundamentals of Christian Theology

- I. Theology
- II. God
- III. Man
- IV. Sin
- V. Moral Government
- VI. Atonement
- VII. Christology
- VIII. Adoption and Regeneration
- IX. The Holy Spirit
- X. The Christian Life
- XI. False Theologies

Chapter IV

I. Theology

Thornwell defined theology as "the science of religion; . . the system of doctrine in its logical connection and dependence¹ which, when spiritually discerned, produces true piety." Theological truth is an objective body of knowledge resulting from the exercise of the faculties of knowledge upon the God-given data in the external world of nature, in the internal realm of human nature and in the unsystematized truths of inspired writings.

Theology is to be distinguished from religion. Religion is the subjective condition of faith and love produced by the Holy Spirit operating in and through objective theological truths.²

Theology differs from philosophy. Philosophy seeks for complete knowledge which is consistent throughout. Theology, ac-

¹ Collected Writings, i, 36, 36-37, 25-26.

² Ibid., i, 37.

cepting the relativity of human knowledge, leaves place for mysteries. Philosophy assumes man's present fallen condition as his original and final state; theology corrects philosophy at this point and at others by its appeal to the touchstone of Divine revelation.³

In dealing with knowledge which is adapted to the human understanding and with that knowledge which represents the highest certainty of man's reflective powers, theology is considered a science. Since it deals with objects and ends of highest human value, and since in its discipline it draws upon all sciences for its data, in turn, inspiring all sciences by the results of its own investigation, theology is the "queen of sciences," its truths "must confessedly stand at the head of all human knowledge!"⁴

Roman Catholics hold that the Church is the primary source of theological truth. This, Thornwell objected, is to confuse effect with cause. Nor is the unassisted human reason the primary source of theological truth. This is to make religion a result of human development, the converse of the truth. Rather, in accordance with the Protestant principle, it was stated: "the only infallible source and measure of religious truth is the Word of God."⁵

The theologian blends with the principles he discovers in the

³ Ibid., i, 83

⁴ Ibid., i, 25, 37, 578-579.

⁵ Ibid., i, 44, 47, 48, 49, 29-30.

nature of human reason the facts of revelation. The whole is then made as coherent as possible by the philosophizing tendency of the human mind. The method of theology is, therefore, a combination of the Scholastic, deductive logic, and of the Positive, the inductive scientific method of Bacon.⁶ The true method of theology is:

to accept the facts of revelation as we accept the facts of nature. We are by enlightened interpretation to ascertain the dicta; these are to be received without suspicion and without doubt. They are the principles of faith. Then from these principles, proceed to the laws, the philosophy if you please, which underlies them, and in which they find their explanation and their unity. In this way we shall reach truth,. . .⁷

Thornwell claimed that no systematic theologian had ever followed out the suggestion of Calvin to make justification the corner-stone of theology. This he attempted to do.⁸ The key question in all theology, "natural" as well as "revealed", is: How can the sinner be justified by the righteous God? Natural theology and the Covenant of Works consider the justification of man as he was created. When the problem is raised with reference to man as sinner, the consideration becomes revealed theology or the Covenant of Grace. Such an organization of the science of theology at once gives truth in its logical order and by exposi-

⁶ Ibid., i, 34-35; iii, 200.

⁷ Ibid., i, 382.

⁸ Ibid., i, 485.

tion rules out erroneous systems of theology.⁹

This point of view made central in Thornwell's theology the term "the Gospel". This concept referred to the revealed message from God offering to men what is their eternal interest to receive and accept, namely, knowledge of how they, as sinners, can be made just in the sight of the righteous God. Earthly knowledge, possessions and honors become secondary considerations when compared with the reception of the Gospel upon which depends "heaven or hell, life or death, eternal life or eternal death."¹⁰

II. God

(1) The Limitations of Man's Knowledge of God. Man's knowledge of God is limited first by his finitude. Thornwell found himself in sympathy with the point of view expressed in Mansel's Bampton lectures of 1858. It is impossible for man as finite to know God as He knows himself. The failure to acknowledge this finitude and limitation of human knowledge was considered the source of much heresy. The admission of finitude and limitation is the true solution of the more perplexing problems in theology concerning God's nature and operations such as those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Prescience of God and the Liberty of

⁹
Ibid., i, 581.

¹⁰
Ibid., ii, 401, 261, 61-66; iii, 178-179. J. H. Thornwell, The Vanity and Glory of Man, pp. 34-37.

Man, the Permission of Evil, the Propagation of Original Sin and the Workings of Efficacious Grace. Our wisdom with reference to these problems is to believe the truth presented in revelation and to adore the Revealer. "True wisdom begins in humility, and the first dictate of humility is not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think."¹¹

Man's knowledge of God is limited also by his present sinfulness. Man is able to know now less of God's nature than once he was capable of knowing. In his present sinful condition, man's capacities are in a defective state and he is rendered an object of Satan's deceitfulness. Speculative reason is led astray, affections are misplaced, the sense of duty is perverted and love goes out to objects less worthy than God. The resultant self-pride makes man dissatisfied with creation as an explanation of the universe's existence, with partial knowledge of his fate, with the revealed righteous character of God implying the necessity of an atonement, and with the duty of worshipping an intangible God. This is not to say that nothing is known of God. But it is to assert that apart from revelation¹² He is nowhere rightly represented by human thought.

(2) The Classical Arguments for God's Existence. The objective existence of God Thornwell considered a postulate demanded

¹¹ Collected Writings, i, 137, 139, 140-141, 142. Henry Longueville Mansel, The Limits of Religious Thought, 1858. W. R. Sorley, History of English Philosophy, p. 242.

¹² Collected Writings, i, 74, 76, 77-80, 82-83, 92, 94, 98.

by the fact in experience that it is needed for the highest functioning of each of man's distinctive capacities. The postulate is also necessary for man's "highest form of life," religion, which was described as the full functioning of man's distinctive capacities in an integrated unity.¹³ The law of causation in man's speculations needs an Infinite Maker of finite realities. The deliverances of conscience require an Author for the moral law, a Judge to whom man is responsible and a Ruler who justly administers rewards and punishments. Love involves cognition of the true, the just and the right as the beautiful and the glorious. Man's highest duty, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, demands an Object worthy of its exercise. Man's failure to know God is admission of his ignorance of himself in his created nature.¹⁴ This line of reasoning Thornwell termed a form of the Cosmological argument which, when supplemented with the Teleological argument, also acceptable, he thought to be conclusive. The ontological argument was considered, as by Kant, to be worthless. The advantage of the Cosmological argument, Thornwell claimed, was that it called for no special capacity for the knowledge of God; this type of knowledge, like all other human knowledge, is both mediate and representative. God's objective existence is given to the believer by immediate inference just as the objective existence of substance is given by immediate in-

¹³
Ibid., i, 53-56.

¹⁴
Ibid., i, 57-60, 66-67, 70-72.

ference in sense perception.

(3) God's Attributes. The attributes of God are indicated in Scriptures by the variety of names applied to Him. By attribute is meant what of God's nature is known; all such thought thereby can be only relative. The best definition of God in terms of His attributes Thornwell thought to be that of the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."¹⁶ The one possible defection observed in this presentation was that it did not explicitly indicate God's Triune character.¹⁷ Attributes of God differ from¹⁸ attributes of substance; "all that He is, He is essentially." The attributes of God may be classified as those which are incommunicable and those which can be communicated to creatures.

God's independence and all-sufficiency, His eternal duration of Being, His immensity and His changelessness are included in His incommunicable attributes. These concepts are produced only by negating for God what are parts of man's finite nature such as his dependence and insufficiency, his necessary relation to¹⁹ time and space and his imperfection and waywardness.

¹⁵ Ibid., 60-66, 73, 456.

¹⁶ "The Shorter Catechism", Question 4. Adopted by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1729.

¹⁷ Collected Writings, i, 160-161.

¹⁸ Ibid., i, 162.

¹⁹ Ibid., i, 494-512.

Central among the communicable attributes of God is that of personality or spirituality. Negatively this is to deny a material essence to God's being. Against Pantheism and Positivism alike it insists on the personal element implied in Creation, in personal moral responsibility and in personal religious communion. Positively the dogma of Divine Personality asserts that God has life within himself, that His activity is the product of His thought and will, that He is self-conscious, and that He has the power of communication with other spirits. It is the last named aspect of the dogma which makes revelation credible. The fact of God's personal nature makes laws of absolute uniformity within His kingdom impossible. God as personal was fully revealed in Jesus Christ; the character of His activity as personal was completely unveiled on Calvary.

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If God be personal and loving, Thornwell thought it reasonable to think that there is some aspect of His Being similar to the Trinity in accordance with which He might be conceived as social by and in Himself. The doctrine of three persons, or three subsistences, with but one essence is to be considered a part of the Christian tradition. It is but a reflection of the implications in redemption: a righteous God to whom the sinner is justified, a God who does for the sinner what he could not do for himself and live, atone for sin, a God by whose influences man's character broken by sin is mended -- yet not three

gods but One God. The Evidence for the Trinity is a spiritual experience; the necessity for some reality similar to it is demanded by the phenomena of grace.²²

(4) God's Decrees. The order in which God appointed creation and predestination is of ethical importance. Superlapsarianism teaches that God, knowing that man would fall and that He would save some who fell, for His glory then created man. Sublapsarianism holds that God created man and that after he fell, God then instituted those proceedings by which some fallen men, by grace, were saved. The difference is illustrated in that between hanging before conviction and hanging after conviction. Thornwell adopted the Sublapsarian position: 1. Because the opposite is revolting to our moral nature and to our conceptions of the goodness and mercy of God. 2. Because the hypothesis of the Superlapsarians, that what is last in execution is first in intention, is factually false; Adam was not made for the sake of the last person born. 3. Because creation is a condition for the working out of a plan and not a means to an end. 4. Because it is impossible to think of the election and damnation of persons before they exist: that is to presuppose an act without an actor. The true order of Decrees is -- Creation; the Fall; Election; Redemption; Vocation. Sublapsarianism has the historical precedent of various Catholic and Reformed confessions.²³

²² Ibid., 163, 511; ii, 342, 343.

²³ Ibid., ii, 20-23.

Making something out of nothing Thornwell regarded as an implication of Creation. This doctrine involves the reality of the external world, as well as its temporal and finite character. As annihilation is but the negative of creation, the doctrine attributes power for both acts to God.²⁴ Creation may be denied only by dualism and pantheism. Dualism makes matter eternal and thus a limitation upon God; as such, the theory can only be considered as "disguised Atheism."²⁵ Pantheism denies that the external world is a substantive reality, that it has a separate and distinct existence from God, and thereby violates those principles of consciousness by which alone human knowledge is possible.²⁶ Creation, as the Theist describes it, is a nearly universal possession of the race, is Scriptural and is concurred in by all philosophers save those who regard creation "as involving a power even transcending that of God."²⁷

Providence is a term applied to activities of God without which creation is hardly intelligible. It indicates the determination of an intelligent will of all those events which relate to men. Security under God's protection and freedom from superstitious fears are the benefits of the conception. The teaching

²⁴
Ibid., i, 208, 219-221.

²⁵
Ibid., i, 207.

²⁶
Ibid., i, 217.

²⁷
Ibid., i, 222.

is designed for edification. It leads to examination of the end, Divinely appointed, which lies beyond all happenings within man's life. Chance is indicative of our ignorance of the nature of events; for God there is no chance. This is not to excuse crime. "God uses men without being a party to their crimes. The sun rouses the odour from the dung-hill, but is not itself defiled."²⁸ Providence implies that nothing transpires within history which can ever take God by surprise.

Predestination is the term for the special decree of God whereby the final destiny of men and of angels was fixed. It is subdivided into Election, securing the everlasting happiness of its objects, and Reprobation, securing the everlasting misery of its objects. As far as men are concerned, this implies: 1. Man is viewed as a fallen being and as an individual, not as races or as communities. 2. The decree is one by absolute sovereignty and is unconditioned by any act or condition of man as fallen. 3. Election is to everlasting life with all the means of attaining it. 4. Election is eternal; once made it is never changed.²⁹ If by partial is meant that God is swayed in His judgment by some consideration of persons, the decree is impartial. If by partial is meant simple selection, then it cannot be denied that God is partial, as it is His sovereign right to be. As to the question of man's moral freedom under such a system of determin-

²⁸ Ibid., i, 616; ii, 36.

²⁹ Ibid., ii, 23-26.

ism, Thornwell stated that this is a question which mortal and finite man can never solve; he can only accept both terms of a contradiction as equally true. The doctrine of predestination, admittedly, implies the infallible perseverance of the saints and the character of the atonement of Christ as limited to those who have been elected by God. Thornwell recognized that this doctrine had been the cause of offense to some Christians. But he insisted in its defence that it preeminently glorifies God, that no one is reprobated who does not deserve to be, that without some such conception there is no free grace, and that "to the humble Christian, . . . it is inexpressibly precious."³⁰

I regard it as no proof of the spirituality of this present age that amid our bustle and excitement so little is said of this precious doctrine of the Gospel. That wicked and profane persons have perverted it to their own eternal undoing I have no disposition to deny. So has every doctrine of the Gospel been perverted. The difficulty is not in the doctrine, but in the heart: swine will trample on a jewel be it ever so precious.³¹

III. Man

There are different aspects of man's nature which, when considered separately, seem to make of him at once different beings. In contrast with God as Infinite, finite man is "the creature of yesterday, who calls corruption his father, and the worm his mother."³² As such man is a totally dependent being and merits

³⁰ Ibid., ii, 191, 112, 160, 182, 198, 201.

³¹ Ibid., ii, 188.

³² Ibid., iii, 269.

nothing whatsoever from God. Even had the first man been obedient to God, he would have been so far from meriting salvation that any salvation he might have received would have still been by the free grace of God.³³

(1) Man as Created. Considered in contrast with the rest of creation, however, man is the center in which all lines converge; he is the microcosm of all created beings; his distinctions are but feeble reflections of the nature of God. His distinctions from the brutes include personality, self-consciousness, reason, conscience, will, love or the yearning for a perfect good, and the substantive basis of unity, the soul. Take these features away from him and he is no longer the son of God; his death is no more a loss than that of a beast.³⁴ Man also has the capacity for immortal life. His earthly life is but that of a stranger and a pilgrim. The postulate of immortality is made necessary for him to give the reason for his creation, to satisfy his intellectual curiosity, to fulfil his power of communion with God, to satisfy his sense of moral responsibility and to provide for ample opportunities for development.³⁵ As created, man was neither infant nor savage, but a man -- in the full maturity of his power, endowed with knowledge, righteousness and holiness,

³³ Ibid., ii, 391.

³⁴ Ibid., i, 223-224. J. H. Thornwell, The Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 28.

³⁵ J. H. Thornwell, The Vanity and Glory of Man, pp. 4-26.

and prepared to act as a moral and responsible agent. His first duty was to confirm by a deliberate act of his own will the goodness of his nature. That act was to establish principles in his nature which were beyond his power to alter afterward. His immediate end was to glorify God by his choice of the good and thus by the time-long praises of those of his kind yet to be born. The moral nature of man's being remains the highest created revelation of God's being. It rests upon and is subject to the moral character of God's being. The law of the creature is the expressed will of its Maker. Whatever man's state, this, by his constitution, remains his necessary relation to God.³⁶

(2) Man as Sinner. Observation and Scriptures alike reveal to us that the present state of man's existence is not his original one and that it is a penal state of condemnation and depravity. The moral history of individuals for which they are held accountable begins before their birth.³⁷ Original sin is of two parts: a subjective condition, "depravity", similar to that to which Adam was reduced after the fall, and an objective imputation of the guilt involved by participation through Adam in that first act of sin.³⁸ Depravity is a disease from which every organ of man's being suffers. This is not to say that man has lost his powers of reason, conscience or taste. It is only to say that

³⁶ Collected Writings, i, 238, 245, 247, 248; ii, 229, 231-232.

³⁷ Ibid., i, 303, 334, 343.

³⁸ Ibid., i, 301.

the correct mode of using these capacities has been lost along with the correct balance between them in their usages.

Thornwell admitted that the guilt imputed for original sin constitutes the thorniest problem in theology. Ultimately it cannot be comprehended how an individual can be guilty for an act in which he did not consciously participate. But, without some such hypothesis, apart from the objectionable preexistence theories of Plato, Origen, Kant, Schelling and others, no explanation can be given for phenomena such as the universality of sin, the constant tendency of evil to out-balance good, the complaint of saints of their sinfulness and the sin apparent in very young

children.⁴⁰ The guilt is imputed through that principle by which Adam, being named by God its representative, acted for the race.⁴¹ By the same principle we may be held accountable for his acts.

In part, the results of this sinfulness of man are: his repugnance to spiritual truth, his avoidance of the simple way of salvation proclaimed by the Gospel, his resistance to every cord by which God attempts to attract him to Himself, his preference for the dim light of his own reasoning rather than for the sure word of prophecy, and his tendency to make a religion for himself rather than to seek for one that has been authoritatively given him.⁴²

40

Ibid., i, 342.

41

Ibid., i, 345.

42

Ibid. i, 91; iii, 181; iv, 564. A. M. Frazer in the Centennial Addresses, p. 37.

Thornwell objected to such liberalistic writers as Channing that they left the impression that man is little less than God. They gave no indication that he has ever become anything less than he was as created. Further they made the will of man so autonomous an entity that they ruled out a supervising Providence which always ⁴³ must be one of the first principles of Theism. Likewise against Samuel J. Baird, who in 1860 wrote The First Adam and the Second in an attempt to challenge the Edwardian orthodoxy of New England, Thornwell maintained that no modification of the representative principle in original sin such as "a numerical identity of nature between Adam and his posterity" ⁴⁴ would suffice to replace "a generic unity" of the human race.

IV. Sin

Sin is "a falling away from God; a deliberate renunciation of the claims of the Creator; a revolt from God to the creature, which involves a complete inversion of the moral destiny of man." ⁴⁵ Objectively, sin is transgression of God's law, disobedience to Him and contradiction to His Holiness. Subjectively, sin is apos-

⁴³ J. H. Thornwell, ed., "Reviews", Southern Quarterly Review, 3d ser., vol. ii, no. 2 (February, 1857), p. 465.

⁴⁴ S. J. Baird, The First Adam and the Second (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakison, 1860) Collected Writings, i, 515-568. T. Peck, "Thornwell's Writings", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. xxix, no. 3 (July, 1878), p. 421.

⁴⁵ Collected Writings, i, 243, 361.

tasy from man's true position as a creature, a vain effort to realize the temptation, "Ye shall be as gods."

Moral distinctions are grounded in the very being of God. Any contradiction to moral distinctions is, thereby, a positive insult to God. Evil, therefore, cannot be considered merely as not-good. Consciousness and speculation alike testify to the reality of evil. Enmity is not simply the absence of love, but active opposition. Sin is not limited to any one faculty of man's nature but is a disposition which pervades his whole nature. The ultimate result of that disposition is the inability⁴⁶ of the sinner to choose any good for its own sake.

The shame which sin carried with it, that it is worthy of punishment, guilt, makes itself apparent in the emotion of remorse. Remorse has two ingredients: the conviction that sin ought to be punished, and the conviction that sin will be punished. The feeling of guilt has no implication for the reformation of the sinner; it applies only to what is needed with reference to the absolute justice of God. Thus, the slightest sin makes the sinner liable to punishment for the remission of which the moral sense makes no provision. This element is that which makes the state of remorse a terror.⁴⁷

Yet despite this fact, there seem to be degrees of guilt parallel to gradations of moral duties. Some sins result in the im-

⁴⁶ Ibid., i, 364, 380, 389, 391, 394, 395.

⁴⁷ Ibid., i, 408-409, 411, 414.

mediate alienation of the sinner from God; others merely make the means of communion occasions of conflict. There is one sin, however, that intense opposition to Christ which would, if permitted, repeat Calvary out of sheer malice, which is entirely without pardon. The most common sin is a want of reverence for God, a sin so enormous that it becomes a matter of astonishment⁴⁸ that God permits such blasphemous creatures to continue to exist.

Sin entered the world and continues its existence only by virtue of the fact that man possesses an intellect and a will. The amazing aspect of this possession is its capacity to perpetrate moral evils the consequences of which it has no ability to⁴⁹ avert.

The Devil is an illustration of the everlasting consequences resulting from the moral abusive exercise of a will. The Scriptures depict him as a personal being who had a trial and a fall. His present duties, under God, are to try true believers by manifold temptations. He can never triumph over them, although he may rule over the wicked. His advances must be repulsed through the operations of motives of a wholly different character; "devils must be ejected by fasting and prayer." Man's only safety from temptations consists in the domination of his entire nature

48

Ibid., i, 429-430, 441; ii, 587-588. At another point Thornwell suggested that neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit might be the "unpardonable sin." Ibid., ii, 366.

49

Ibid., ii, 251; i, 612. Thornwell quoted Edwards at length on this point.

by the "fear of God,"⁵⁰

V. Moral Government

Thornwell denied that the relations between man and God rest upon the arbitrary will of God. God is in His Being moral. Man was created as a morally responsible agent. The relations between man and God, therefore, "spring from the very nature of the beings, giving rise to duties and obligations, on man's part, that are essential and unalterable."⁵¹ These relations constitute moral government. With reference to God, moral government implies that, however He may transcend, He can never contradict the principle of Justice. The obligation to do right, to glorify God, or, to be "imitators of God as dear children", is the "natural and unchanging law"⁵² of man, the moral creature. The two principles of moral government, competent authority on the part of the governor and a rule of life for the guidance of the governed, therefore, spring necessarily from the natures of the two persons involved in the relationship. Pleasure and pain are distributed as rewards and punishments in precise proportion to the good or ill desert of the agents. The condition of rewards is

⁵⁰ Ibid., ii, 603; i, 612.

⁵¹ Ibid., i, 41.

⁵² Ibid., ii, 233; i, 41.

absolute obedience; one act of disobedience dispells all hopes of reward. Under strict moral government, therefore, man is never exempt from the possibility of falling. Men are treated as individuals. Moral government knows nothing of moral discipline; a straight line with one curve is no longer straight.⁵³

The distinction is made between the obedience of a servant who performs duties out of a sense of justice with a view to distributed pain and pleasure and that of a son who obeys that he may enjoy privileges as acts of benevolence from God.⁵⁴

By the Covenant of Works is meant that alteration of moral government whereby Adam, as the appointed representative of the human race, was given the possibility of obtaining elevation of the race from the relation to God as servant to that of son. His one act of disobedience destroyed, as far as he was concerned, all possibility, on the basis of strict justice, of man's becoming a son. It rendered all men represented by Adam susceptible of the pain involved in rebellion from moral government. The physical unity of the race through Adam is but the basis of his representation of the race under the Covenant of Works. All the present strictures upon the pleasures of existence -- pain, suffering, sorrow, accidents, the sterility of the earth, stratification of society, et. al. -- must be viewed as having entered the realm of existence as direct results of Adam's fail-

⁵³
Ibid., i, 255-257, 263.

⁵⁴
Ibid., i, 258-259.

ure in the Garden experiment. Hell, it may be assumed, is but the intensification and eternal extent of these pains; the Biblical symbol of them is "spiritual death."

VI. Atonement

Thornwell thought God's greatness was never so truly revealed as when, in the person of His Son, He died, both that the sinner might be justified and that His character as Just might not be impugned.⁵⁶ It was in this light that atonement was viewed, as that method, devised by God's wisdom and executed by His power, whereby both ends might be achieved at the sacrifice of neither.

God might have received the sinner without satisfaction but this would have been to deny His own character. There was and is no principle by which unconditional remission of sins is possible for God, He being what He is. That would have been to sacrifice the end of moral government namely, the Glory of God. Therefore God's grace stimulated His wisdom by His power to design a method of justification. Involved in that scheme of grace was the incarnation of the Son, His being made a representative of the race like Adam, His winning through His obedience what Adam lost through his disobedience -- that is, obedience un-

55

Ibid., i, 260-262, 264-269, 271, 293-297; iv, 420-421.

56

Ibid., ii, 461.

to the Cross -- and His resurrection as God's visible sign that the price of sin had been paid and that, through sacrifice, justification had been won for sinners.⁵⁷

The end of atonement was to enforce the authority of God's sovereign Justice. Involved in the theory expounded is the conclusion that there is but one way of salvation and that is through Christ.⁵⁸ He was the substitute of the elect, rendering on their behalf satisfaction to Divine justice. In contrast with this view, Thornwell held universal salvation and the atonement as a moral influence to appear but refined systems of error. Atonement as vicarious sacrifice for the elect is the only view by which the estranged sinner can be brought to the reconciled Father; "love is the talisman by which God subdues the sinner's heart and gains his supreme affection."⁵⁹

What was won in atonement for the elected sinners was deliverance from spiritual death, an imputation of a righteousness of character which he had not obtained for himself and hence the possibility and beginning of the formation of a holy character like unto God's, the supreme end of the creature's being.⁶⁰

The central question in theology for Thornwell was, as has been stated: How can the sinner be justified by the righteous God? The method extended to Adam as the first modification by

⁵⁷ Ibid., ii, 205-206, 213, 226, 247, 322-325.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 239, 434. Thornwell's paper on the fundamentals of Presbyterian theology, 1838. Quoted by George Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, ii, 572.

⁵⁹ Collected Writings, ii, 199, 371-372, 378-379.

the grace of God of moral government constituted the Covenant of Works. The method extended to Christ as the second modification by a merciful God of moral government whereby through faith the sinner is made just in the sight of God constituted the Covenant of Grace. This, then, is the essence of the Gospel: "Jesus dying for our sins and raised again for our justification. Where these elements are wanting, whatever else may be found, there is no Christianity. A penal death and a perfect righteousness imputed, the one for pardon and the other for acceptance --
 61
 . . . to deny these is to deny Christ."

VII. Christology

Thornwell readily admitted that in this department of theology, especially in the doctrines of the incarnation and of the subsistence of two natures in one person, there are mysteries which, perhaps, "shall forever transcend the capacities of creatures."
 62
 What is known is deduced, in large measure, from what was done by Him who made the atonement.

The disastrous results of Adam's disobedience pointed to the

61
Ibid., i, 639; ii, 38-39, 100.

62
Ibid., ii, 73. The incarnation and the virgin birth are doctrines which Thornwell assumed but never treated fully. The union of the two natures in one person he left with the appellation of a mystery to be accepted.

need of a Mediator who could share man's humanity and still be capable of bearing that penalty for sin's guilt which no creature could bear and still live. Hypothetically it was necessary that there be a single Person who should be at once truly God and man. His union with humanity was to make us sons of God. His union with God was to make Him able as Life to swallow up death and as Righteousness to conquer sin and Hell. "God and Man he must be to meet the exigencies of our case."⁶²

That Jesus Christ was such a person is the testimony of Scripture. His claims to complete jurisdiction over Himself, to immortality, to absolute sovereignty, to his receipt of a commission from God as a free agent, all bear the burden of Godhead. His birth of woman, his life, human though exemplarily so, his real temptations and his death, all point to Christ's humanity.⁶³

Viewed as a bearing of a judicial sentence upon sin, the atonement is seen merely as the death of a substitute. Viewed with knowledge of the priestly character of Christ's Person, the act becomes an august and glorious self-sacrifice as a part of worship. Standing before the altar of God's justice, Christ, the priest, confesses his people's sins. He adores the justice which dooms them to woe for their sins and pleads that justice shall not slacken or abate. Then He lays down His life upon that altar, "virtually saying, Take it, . . . ; let the fire of justice consume it; better . . . this . . . than that the throne

⁶³ Ibid., ii, 323, 98; i, 631.

of the Eternal should be tarnished by an effeminate pity!"⁶⁵

The atonement is made throughout by Christ's initiative, every step of it being made glorious because it is one of adoration and praise.⁶⁶ The resurrection was God's token that the Prisoner of Divine justice had been released after having paid the supreme penalty. So high a favor had that Prisoner found in God's eyes that He was given entrance into the Holy of Holies there perpetually to offer intercessions on behalf of a sinful and a sinning humanity.⁶⁷

The effect of Christ's mediatorship, thus, is two-fold as symbolized by the Water and the Blood. The Blood stands for the sinner's change of status, for his having been declared just before the presence of God; the Blood is the token of the death required as a prerequisite for the change. The water, scriptural symbol of purity and holiness, the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, typifies the change in character; that sinner who has been justified enters upon the growth which leads ultimately for the elect souls, by God's grace through the Holy Spirit, objectively to sanctification in God's sight and subjectively to eternal life.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid., ii, 279.

⁶⁶ Ibid., ii, 280-281.

⁶⁷ Ibid., ii, 283, 67, 98, 99.

⁶⁸ Ibid., iii, 344.

Early in his career, Thornwell projected a book on the Eternal Sonship of Christ.⁶⁹ Beyond certain sermons on the theme he never fulfilled this desire. It is to be regretted for, however the theological assumptions upon which it rests may be viewed, his treatment of the atonement as an act of worship has a dramatic appeal which surely might well have had a wider reading than it has had in its present form. As it stands, it forms Thornwell's chief contribution to Christology and one of his few distinctions as a technical theologian.

VIII. Adoption and Regeneration

Adoption, God's elevation of man from the status of a servant to that of a son, Thornwell considered His crowning blessing. It was this which was extended to Adam and this which, when lost through him, was gained by the obedience of Christ. It makes possible a filial relationship of man to God and thereby opens to him the joys of a more intimate communion with God which was not previously possible for him either by his nature as created or by his state as sinner.⁷⁰

The subjective condition of adoption is regeneration. In this, too, man's part is that of being the passive recipient of the direct and immediate operation of the Holy Spirit in renewing the

⁶⁹ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 261.

⁷⁰ Collected Writings, i, 476.

heart. The ultimate effect of what may be a long process of regeneration under the guidance and power of the Spirit is the making sure of faith in the Gospel, the exercise of matured holy affections toward God alone as the object of religious devotion.⁷¹

IX. The Holy Spirit

As the data for Christology, in a measure, must be inferred from Christ's work as Mediator, so what is known concerning the Holy Spirit is, in part, drawn from the Spirit's activities in redemption. His existence can be denied only by those who refuse all supernatural influences in redemption. His office is that of leading men to believe in Christ, and in the Gospel. His nature as personal is implied in the Scriptures and cannot be denied save by those who view salvation as man's application of industry, zeal and diligence in holy living rather than as a free and gracious gift of a sovereign God. The Spirit alone redeems, alone is given the prerogative of applying the forgiving blood of Christ to the elect of God.⁷²

The Holy Spirit in regeneration also has a role to play with reference to the Scriptures. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the biblical authors as they wrote. This dogma lay at the basis

71

Thornwell's paper on the fundamentals of Presbyterian theology, 1838. George Howe, op. cit., ii, 337-367.

72

Collected Writings, ii, 337-367.

of Thornwell's acceptance of the verbal dictation theory of inspiration. It is the Holy Spirit operating through the Scriptures on the heart of the reader which quickens his heart into accepting the truths not merely in a rationalistic manner but also in a way such that they appear to him to be Divine truths with which he, as a sinner, is and must be vitally concerned.⁷³ In this way the Holy Spirit fulfilled in Thornwell's thought something of the function assigned by the Barthians to das Wort.

X. The Christian Life

Justification by faith is a traditional feature of reformed theology. Belief constituted a major part of religious life for Thornwell. Faith is not to be considered a ground of justification, however; it is but the channel through which Christ's atonement is made effective and by which His righteousness is imputed. By faith also God, through the Holy Spirit, reveals true knowledge of Himself, of man's true nature and of the saving devise of the Gospel. Hence, wherever in this technical use of the term, there is faith or belief, there is an individual or group of individuals who are among the elect of God. The Holy Spirit's means of producing and maturing faith is the Bible; both Spirit and Bible are necessary effectually to produce faith.

The Spirit alone ends only in fanaticism, the Bible alone is a dead letter the result of which can only be formalism.⁷⁴

"The Gospel does not propose to make our present state a perfect one -- to make our earth a heaven."⁷⁵ Thus did Thornwell disclaim the view of romantic Christian liberalism that the kingdom of God is the earthly society of men evolving itself into Utopia. Such results of Adam's sin as disease, poverty and death, the sterility of the earth and social classes, in the Providence of God, may be overruled for good to individuals but in this world they can never be totally eradicated.

The major implication of salvation for man is a subjective one, his acquisition of a temper of mind and a disposition of will perfectly to fulfill his moral obligations to God out of a motivation which looks alone to God's glorification.⁷⁶ Once this lesson is learned, man has achieved the perfect freedom, release from the bondage of sin. Such a subjective state cannot be achieved through philosophical disciplines; it must come alone by God's grace through His gift to man of a new nature, that is, through what the Scriptures term a re-birth. That new nature is called "holiness" because it is an approximation to the distinctively holy character of God and because it is a subjective nature

⁷⁴ Ibid., ii, 325-326, 330; iii, 181; iv, 565.

⁷⁵ Ibid., iv, 420: see also p. 422.

from which alone comes those holy activities and habits which are pleasing to that holy God. The analogical term given in the New Testament for holiness is "life". As this analogy indicates, holiness, by its very nature, is indefinable. Like the concepts power and causation, holiness is humanly inconceivable although it is impossible for humans not to believe in the existence of an unknown reality which is signified by the term.⁷⁷ The New Testament analogy for holiness also indicates that holiness is pervasive of the whole personality; it is this which makes every act, habit, disposition and motive of the holy man serviceable to God. Holiness is not to be considered a ground of salvation. It is a part of the benefit received; "it is our meetness for heaven, not our title to it."⁷⁸

Thus eternal life, in the New Testament sense of the term, is not perpetual existence. An eternity of earthly life would be only "continued vanity." Eternal life is holiness by which the character of man approximates the holiness of God and fits him more and more to contemplate God's glory and, at length, enables him immediately to envisage God's face.⁷⁹ The way to eternal life is the Gospel.

The opposite of eternal life or holiness is not physical death

⁷⁷ Ibid., iii, 172; ii, 472-474. Vanity and Glory of Man, p. 28.

⁷⁸ Collected Writings, ii, 389; i, 369.

⁷⁹ Vanity and Glory of Man, pp. 28, 32, 38.

but spiritual death, the New Testament symbol of depravity and the dissolution of man's rightful nature as the son of God.⁸⁰ Physical death can be viewed by the thoughtful sinner only as "the porch of the judgment hall"; God has received an immortal soul the eternal doom of which, either for good or for ill, is sealed. Man's universal susceptibility to death is an evil used by God in His Providence to proclaim the vanity of earthly things and to turn man's attention to the weightier matters of the Gospel.

The stress in Thornwell's theology on God's personal control by Providence of all events concerned with man's life led him to see in the Christian life a method by which man may ascertain God's will for him at any given moment and in any given decision. Man's appeal for "guidance" is made in utter honesty of purpose by simple and earnest prayer. God's answer is made affirmatively by impressing upon the conscience such a keen sense of duty in just the direction He would have men move as to give to that man a feeling of "woe is me" if I fail to do this will of God. The absence of such a feeling of duty constitutes either no answer or a negative answer to the individual's seeking. This conception was no mere theory for Thornwell; he applied it personally so vigorously that, as he confessed, "My friends sometimes charge⁸¹ me with a spice of fanaticism." This aspect of his religious

80

Collected Writings, iii, 173.

81

B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 266.

thought may be considered as an element of Puritanism

The consequences to man of accepting or rejecting the Gospel are tremendous. The success of the Gospel is, under God, in the hands of Christians. It is, therefore, a central duty of Christians to labor earnestly, in harmony with other Christians, with steadfastness, with but the spiritual weapons of the Gospel, and with entire dependence upon God for results, to the end that the Gospel's imperative message of salvation may be made available to all men everywhere. ⁸² This, in summary, was the burden of one of Thornwell's early sermons. It remained throughout his life one of the theological bases upon which his distinctively earnest endeavors for the missionary enterprises of the Church rested.

IX. False Theologies

There are three classes of theologies which Thornwell considered to be false. This judgment followed, in part, from the theology of the Reformation which he adopted as being true. Consideration of them is offered here in this order: the errors of Roman Catholic theology, the traditional heresies of Pelagianism, Arminianism and Socinianism, and rationalistic theology which, from Thornwell's point of view, constituted the major modern departure from truth.

(1) Treatment is given elsewhere in this study to what he

thought errors inherent in the social and political views of the Roman Catholic church. These views belong chronologically to a later development of his thought. His first attack upon Romanism grew out of an article he wrote in 1841 on the error of receiving as inspired Scriptures the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha. This led him into a prolonged exchange of open letters with a representative of the Catholic church from Charleston.⁸³ The Jewish church rejected the Apocrypha as Scriptures, Thornwell maintained, as did also Christ who approved and confirmed only the works of the Hebrew canon. The Christian church for four hundred years of its life also rejected them. The only argument the Catholic church can offer for them as Scriptures, which argument bears weight only with its followers, is that the infallible church has declared the works to be Divine.⁸⁴ It is this very act of apostasy in making the Church replace God as authoritative in religion and in morals which was viewed as the heresy by which Catholicism discredits man's moral sensibilities. The absurdity of transubstantiation in accordance with which a man is asked both to believe his senses and to doubt them simultaneously Thornwell thought but another result of the error of making the Church's pronouncements through the Holy See infallible. In Romanism he saw nothing else than making man's morality

83

R. J. Breckinridge, ed., The Baltimore Visitor, 1841. See Collected Writings, iii, 280. J. H. Thornwell, The Arguments of Romanists . . . in Behalf of the Apocrypha . . . (New York, 1844), Collected Writings, iii, 413-742.

84

Collected Writings, iii, 742.

and religion rest ultimately on his relation to Rome and not, as⁸⁵ is proper, on his relations to God and to society.

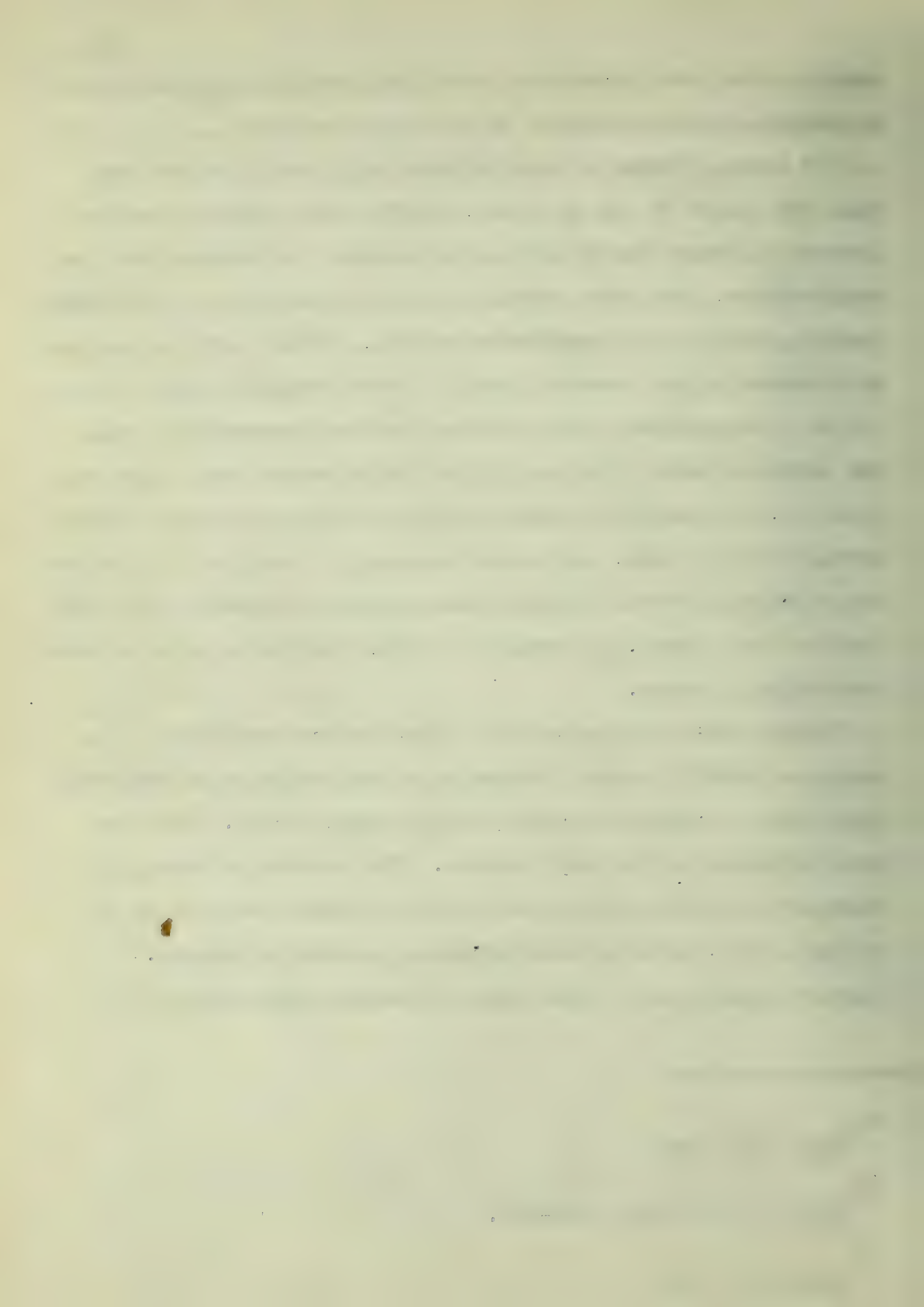
The Roman doctrine of man by which his blind impulses are made the ground of sin is false. Man's basic impulses are not immoral although they do possess a tendency to excesses and irregularities. The mere exercise of them, however, in Thornwell's thought, could not be considered sinful. In the same connection, he objected to the Romanist view of man's original nature of purity as a supernatural gift. It was no more supernatural than was creation itself for the gift of man's nature was a part of creation. The Romanist classification of sins as venial and as deadly is also false. All sins are equally deadly as all poisons are equally poisonous although some may be more immediately effective than others. To speak of venial sins is to utter a contradiction in terms.⁸⁶

The Romanist affirmation that miracles are performed by the Church of today Thornwell denied as a fact although he admitted there was no Scriptural reason why it should be so. Miracles were performed by the early church. The present withdrawal of this gift of supernatural power could be explained only as "a rebuke to the Church's unfaithfulness and want of prayer."⁸⁷ Thornwell quoted with favor Calvin's charge that there is no

⁸⁵
Ibid., iii, 509.

⁸⁶
Ibid., i, 238, 240, 436-438.

⁸⁷
Ibid., iv, 17.



ground for Roman Catholic mysticism as direct and personal revelations from God of Himself in His essential Being. The created world is to be considered the only visible means by which God presents Himself to our contemplation.⁸⁸ The Catholic doctrine of supererogatory works is a denial of the truth concerning the nature of holiness and, as such is a degradation^{de} of true piety from obedience to God "to the punctilious observance of the uncommanded devices of men."⁸⁹

It was no accident, as Thornwell saw it, that at the time of the Reformation the corruption of the clergy was enormous. These abuses in Christian life he considered but the legitimate, natural and necessary results of that corrupt theology which the Church, through this clergy, attempted to propagate.⁹⁰

(2) Pelagianism and Arminianism alike Thornwell thought to rest on a misapprehension of the way in which God views sinful man. The theories thereby fail to conceive the necessity of an arrangement of the representative principle whereby God's grace may be effective in changing a man's status in His sight. The error of these systems, like that of deism, is that either of disregarding the Scriptures and their teaching or of reading into the Scriptures the speculations of men. By denial of man's original sin and by affirmation that each man stands in approbation

⁸⁸
Ibid., i, 111.

⁸⁹
Ibid., ii, 569.

⁹⁰
Ibid., iii, 509

relation to God identical with that in which Adam stood to God, these systems, in theory, deny to God the capacity of making eternal purposes and thereby they establish principles which carried out in all their necessary consequences would lead either to impersonal Deism or to "blank and cheerless Atheism."⁹¹ The confusion of thought must be considered the result of introducing into God's truth man's manipulations of ideas. Fortunately, Thornwell felt, in their Christian life, when loyalty to their systems of theology was laid aside, Pelagians and Arminians alike were to be found "sober and honest-hearted Calvinists, as their earnest prayers for grace and assistance unequivocally declare."⁹²

Followers of Socinian theology by denial of the Trinity, the depravity of man, the vicarious sacrifice and eternal punishment, Thornwell wrote, "are no more entitled to be considered as Christians than Mohammedans."⁹³ He concerned himself solely with the Socinian attack upon the vicarious atonement. The blessings of God are received by the Socinian, he thought, as effects which may be produced by man through proper manipulations as by a mechanical process. The personal influence of God the Holy Spirit in redemption is denied. Hence redemption is not considered either as spiritual or as Divine and God is thought a hard-hearted Judge in whose heart mercy was born only through the death of Christ

⁹¹ Ibid., ii, 145, 111, 216, 390, 528.

⁹² Ibid., ii, 146.

⁹³ Ibid., i, 434.

on the cross. So far from the truth Thornwell judged Socinianism to be that, as he wrote, the very obverse of each of its tenets⁹⁴ represents the true proposition.

(3) Thornwell encompassed in the single term of rationalism all forms of speculation which begin with a skepticism in reference to the validity of sense perception and which end in an attempt to uncover naked essence and to trace the esse through its countless manifestations from the lowest form to the Absolute, the simple and all-inclusive Being. In general this is the view which has come to be known as Hegelian Absolute Idealism. Thornwell at no point designated it as such. He considered the view as not at all "the vision(s) of crack-brained enthusiasts" but as the work of "men of the highest order of mind" who reason and think with rigor of abstraction, intensity of attention and nicety of distinction which is bound to be respected.⁹⁵ Thornwell considered attention to this form of religious thought to be a necessity because, he prophesied, in the immediate future it would have great vogue in this country, making the error of⁹⁶ its theological implications the more prevalent.

In 1849 J. D. Morell, author of a widely known History of Modern Philosophy, published a work entitled The Philosophy of Religion. This work was an application of the principles of Ger-

⁹⁴ Ibid., ii, 210, 350.

⁹⁵ Ibid., iii, 98.

⁹⁶ Ibid., iii, 27.

man idealism to Christian theology. It seems to have had a wide reading in this country due alike to the reputation of its author's previous work and to the devotional character of the language in which it was written.⁹⁷ The three articles which Thornwell wrote for the Southern Presbyterian Review in review of this book were sufficiently extensive to indicate clearly not only his estimate of the work reviewed but also his view of the religious philosophy it represented. One reviewer of Thornwell's writings⁹⁸ judged the series to include the best of his critical thought. Thomas Smyth, one of his South Carolina contemporaries who did not always agree with him, valued the articles so highly that he sent copies of them to Drs. Cunningham and Candlish in England.⁹⁹ The general evaluation which Thornwell placed on Morell's work is indicated in these remarks:

We do not hesitate . . . to rank Mr. Morell's book in the class of infidel publications. He has assailed the very foundations of the faith; and in resisting his philosophy we are defending the citadel of Christianity from the artful machinations of a traitor, who, with honeyed words of friendship and allegiance upon his tongue, is in actual treaty to deliver it into the hands of the enemy of God and man.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ T. Peck, op. cit., p. 425.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 426.

⁹⁹ Letter: B. M. Palmer to J. H. Thornwell, September 10, 1850. Anderson-Thornwell letters. Mss. collection, University of North Carolina library, Chapel Hill, N. C.

¹⁰⁰ Collected writings, iii, 26-27.

The method of rationalism Thornwell viewed as excessively pretentious and essentially arrogant both in its aspirations to penetrate to the very essence of things and in its assumption that human reason is competent of omniscience and therefore competent to give answers to the sublimest problems of God, the soul and the universe. It is, he remarked, difficult to say whether presumption or folly is the more conspicuous in such a system of thought.¹⁰¹ In denying the truly scientific and philosophical attitude toward the external world, the self and God, as that was enunciated by Bacon and others, rationalism bases its conclusions upon a fallacy. Knowledge of metaphysical entities cannot be had by reason alone. The entire energies of the self are involved.¹⁰²

The assumed method of rationalism leads to an unwanted trust in the data of subjective experience. The external world is constructed from such data and God is made in a similar manner. In thus denying the external and the supernatural as known immediately, rationalism, unwittingly, revolts from all forms of true intelligence and, in fact, pronounces man's most familiar consciousness to be an impossibility. It is on this basis, as well as on other scores to be noted, that Thornwell fixed his claim that

101

Ibid., iii, 11.

102

Ibid., i, 38-39. J. H. Thornwell, "Matt. xxii.29", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. iv, no. 4, (April, 1850), pp. 516-517.

103

Collected Writings, i, 501-502; iii, 267.

rationalism is at war with the first principles of Theism.¹⁰³

The theological controversy between rationalism and Christianity, as Thornwell saw it, "turns upon the question, Whether we have been left to ourselves, whether theology is in fact, like all other sciences, the production of man, or whether God has framed it for us ready to our hands?"¹⁰⁴ Rationalism presumes that inspiration carries with it no intelligible content. Christianity holds that in inspiration truths are communicated from the mind of God to the mind of the inspired man in full, logical exposition. There is, Thornwell insisted, a subjective side of the religious experience but this is never autonomous; it is always conditioned by the external object God.¹⁰⁵ The danger of making religious authority exclusively subjective in origin is that all sense of moral responsibility is lost. The Word of God gives both a moral standard and a criterion of truth. Those who reject it as authoritative must kindle their own fires and walk in their own light with the full assurance that neither their intuitions nor their impulses will save them from the moral government and its penalties which is whispered in conscience, thundered on Sinai and hallowed on Calvary. God will by no means clear the guilt. Thus, Thornwell concluded, in attempting to replace an auth-

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Collected Writings, i, 501-502; iii, 267.

¹⁰⁴

Ibid., iii, 29, 160-161.

¹⁰⁵

Ibid., i, 39-40.

oritative Bible with the authority of Christian consciousness -- introspection together with social fellowship in the Christian community -- the rationalists are motivated by a deep opposition to the doctrines of the Cross. "When men cry, Down with the Bible! the real meaning of their rage is, Away with Jesus and His Cross!"¹⁰⁶

Rationalism makes activity the criterion for distinguishing between substance and attribute. Thornwell objected to this position on grounds suggested by Spinoza. Substance is that which is in itself and conceived by itself. Activity cannot be conceived by itself and therefore is not a substance but an attribute. Absolute activity is no more capable of representation in the mind than is absolute intelligence or absolute motion. That the mind is active is understandable but that activity thinks is meaningless. The two propositions are poles apart. Thus activity as an attribute is acceptable, as a substance it cannot be.¹⁰⁷

This attempt to make mind and matter but phenomenal modifications of the same substance, activity, is but an indication of rationalism's pantheistic tendencies. These proceed from the conviction that the power of creation, making something out of

106

Ibid., ii, 18-19, 22, 23; iii, 155, 167, 168.

107

Ibid., iii, 91-92.

nothing, is one which is not available even to God. Rationalism's pantheism is a resultant of its confusion in conceiving of God both as the cause of all being and as the substance of all that exists. The whole doctrine of the Absolute revolves on this blunder, Thornwell charged. God may be thought of as Cause or as the Substance of all Being but not as both. The results of rationalism's theory of God is necessarily to make Him impersonal; personality is considered but a partial form of God's being. Under the conception there can be no real causality, and thus no creation. The logical conclusion of the philosophy of the Absolute is that of nihilism; consciousness can only be, as Fichte admitted, the dream of a dream.¹⁰⁸

The truth is, Thornwell affirmed, rationalism's theology is necessarily a form of conceptualism. Rather than taking the needs of man's entire nature as indicative of the sort of God who created man with such needs, not to mention failing to receive God's revelation of Himself through inspired writings, rationalism lays upon men the duty of forming from their own experience a conception of God. But this is like telling a hungry man first to conceive and then create the bread which will then satisfy his hunger; or a thirsty man, from the mere craving of his thirst, to image and then produce water. The subjective needs and desires of man, so far from being the antecedents of fulfillment, are but the results of knowledge; man's nature as created supplies religious

demands which the Creator who fashioned the demands alone can
 109
 satisfy.

Rationalism's tendency to deny the objective aspects of conscience's dictates is but a reflection of the fact that those who frame the theories realize that conscience gives in its demands intimations of the personality of God.
 110

The metaphysics of rationalism is a fair sample, Thornwell stated, of what man's reason unassisted is able to achieve in world-making. Apart from revelation, man speedily becomes overwhelmed with a species of Pantheism in which all sense of duty and of religion perishes. The fatalism of Mohammed has the virtue of consistency. Rationalism claims consistency and yet affirms on one hand the essential and indestructible freedom of man and on the other the necessary relation of every form of being to the absolute. No form of heathenism, Thornwell concluded, can be regarded as absurd with such an illustration as rationalism of what unassisted reason is capable of producing for
 111
 itself.

Clearly a revealed religion with knowledge of man's sinfulness, God's holiness and Christ's atonement as a means of justification, in other words, the Gospel, is the one which alone, in Thornwell's thought, can satisfy the necessities of the central

109
Ibid., i, 508.

110
Ibid., i, 509.

111
Ibid., iii, 26.

problem in Christian theology.

Chapter V

Social and Political Philosophy

I. Social Philosophy

1. The Unity of Humanity
2. The Nature of Human Society
3. Society and the Individual
4. The Organization of Society
5. Social Progress and Social Change
6. The Principles of Social Ethics
7. Problems in Social Ethics

II. Political Philosophy

1. The Moral Nature of the State
2. The Function and Form
of Government
3. A View of State Autonomy

III. Thornwell and Politics

1. Before 1860
2. After 1860
3. During the War

Chapter V.

Thornwell repeatedly pleaded for a just evaluation of the South's share in the development of America's social and political thought. He wrote in 1860, " . . . that we have done much to expose the fallacies and dangers of prevailing theories in regard to the scope and purpose of political institutions, (and) that we have been eminently conservative in our influence upon the spirit of the age, -- it seems to us, cannot be decently denied."¹

I. Social Philosophy

(1) The Unity of Humanity. A central concept in Thornwell's social thinking was that of the unity of mankind as a race. Man's common nature, the identity of the nature of human consciousness, its spontaneity in sense perception and its spontaneity in its reflective movements and the parity upon which all

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Collected Writings, iv, 402.

men stand before God are indicative of this unity. Christianity has the distinction of building upon this unity of human nature to establish "a sacred brotherhood in a common origin, a common ruin, a common immortality and a common Savior, which unites the descendents of Adam into one great family, and renders wars, discords, and jealousies as odious as they are hurtful."²

Thornwell could not escape from the doctrine, however mysterious, of a generic unity in man. The human race is not an aggregate of separate and independent atoms, but constitutes an organic whole, with a common life, springing from a common ground. Society is the point in which all the individuals meet, and through which they are modified and conditioned. But there is a type of life common to the entire race in which a deeper ground of unity is recognized than that which attaches to particular societies. There is in man what we may call a common nature. That common nature is not a mere generalization of logic, but a substantive reality. It is the ground of all individual existence, and conditions the type of its development. In birth there is the manifestation of the individual from a nature-basis which existed before. Birth consequently does not absolutely begin, but only individualizes humanity.

(2) The Nature of Human Society. Thornwell did not formally define what he meant by society. He described it as the rela-

² Ibid., iii, 211, 139.

³ Ibid., i, 350.

tion by which individuals hold mutual intercourse. His social thought dealt chiefly with the proper attitude which should be taken toward society.

He observed the differences between persons of various nationalities. There is one type among the Greeks, another among the Asiatics, and still another among the Romans. This led him to the conclusion that society exerts even a more powerful influence upon the individual than the individual does upon society. It is a mistake, however, to think that this situation was arranged by man for the purpose of producing good citizens. God, in creation, intended it to be so. In this way, therefore, society must be viewed as an ordinance of God. Human individuals have their beginnings and their ends outside history. While on earth, these persons live in society. It is God's ordering.⁴

Society is "natural" in the sense that it is grounded in the nature of man who is created a dependent being. He is dependent upon an objective right for his ethical judgments, upon an objective God for his religious capacities and upon human associations for the development of such aspects of his being as mutual understanding and personality.⁵ One of the most mysterious attributes of the human mind is its power to impart to others knowledge of what takes place within it. This peculiarity lies at the foundation of the possibility of society. If each soul ex-

⁴ Ibid., iv, 406; i, 350.

⁵ Ibid., iii, 252; ii, 524-525.

isted only as an individual, there might be contiguity in space, but there could be no moral unions such as the Family, the Church and the State. Persons naturally seek union; society is the sphere in which this mysterious reality called personality becomes fully and completely developed. All finite persons would be miserable if there were none to converse with, and every principle of morality, truth, justice and benevolence presupposes the existence of a social economy. Man was evidently created a social being. The Home, the Family and the State are indispensable to his progress and development. He was born in society and for society; it is a condition in which God has placed him, and from which he cannot be divorced.⁶

There are two views of society to which Thornwell objected. The first is that which springs from the "social contract" theory of Hobbes. As Thornwell interpreted it, this theory seems to regard society as the machinery of man, which, as it has been invented and arranged by his ingenuity and skill, may be taken to pieces, reconstructed, altered and repaired, as experience shall indicate defects or confusion in the original plan. Such a view overlooks the fact of God's part in the formation of society through His designing the nature of the social being, the individual man. It neglects the great lessons that man can never make straight that which God has made crooked, and that man progresses only as he learns humble obedience to the will of God.⁷

The other objectionable view of society is that Platonic Real-

⁶
Ibid., i, 511.

⁷
Ibid., iv, 406.

ism involved in the modern doctrine of progress, namely, the conception that the individual is nothing, humanity is everything. This theory tends to make humanity a logical abstraction. But mankind is a real, substantive entity, something which, though inseparable from all the individuals of the human race, is yet distinct. It is to this entity that each individual is indebted for his being a human. It may be that the laws of thought are the same for all men, and for the same men at all times, but the men in themselves are not the same. There is an immense difference between the logical consciousness of a Newton and that of a contemporary Hottentot. Similarly there is something which may be designated as "the general voice of mankind" but its validity always rests upon deliverances made by individuals.⁸

(3) Society and the Individual. It is true that individual persons, like the Triune Personal God, are compelled by their natures to hold communion with other kindred spirits. Yet the relation established between these individuals is nothing in itself apart from the individuals involved. The reality in all social thought, Thornwell held, was the individual. Nothing can be more indubitable to us than our own personality, the existence of our own thoughts, feelings and volitions, the being which each man calls himself.⁹

⁸ Ibid., iii, 131, 134-135.

⁹ Ibid., iii, 132.

It is the moral character of human personality which gives human society its moral nature. Men were created for mutual associations in social groups. Apart from such intercourse there is no means for their becoming moral agents. Society as a relation between moral agents has moral ideals as its basic principles. Moral ideals are aspects of God's character. It is the divinely given personality of the individuals who compose society, together with the divine nature of society's ideals, which makes society a divine ordinance. The fundamental entity in all social relations is the individual men involved in society and their Creator.

X (4) The Organization of Society. During the late 1850's and early 1860's Southerners gave much thought to the ideal form of labor organization. The editor of the Muscorree (Georgia) Herald is quoted in the New York Tribune for September 10, 1856 as having written:

Free society! we sicken at the name. What is it but a conglomeration of greasy mechanics, filthy operatives, small-fisted farmers, and moon-struck theorists? All the North, and especially the New England states, is devoid of society fitted for well-bred gentlemen.¹⁰

In the same year William J. Grayson of South Carolina published The Hireling and the Slave, a monograph in which he contrasted in rather lurid language the northern and southern systems of labor organization. The major thesis of this work was that "civilization rests on labor exploitation," that this is not the

ideal situation but an evil due to "the primeval curse" upon "the children of Adam." The state of the hireling and that of the slave is essentially the same, consisting for both of hard labor and of subsistence reward. Since, however, the slave has a degree of social security unknown to the hireling, Grayson concluded, "the slave obtains a larger reward for his labor than ¹¹ the factory hand."

Thornwell joined in this movement of thought. The conclusions he drew were similar to those of Grayson. Certain aspects of his arguments are unique. Where labor is free, that is, where the laborer is not a part of the capital wealth of the country, there are two causes which must inevitably produce revolutions and distress. The first is the tendency for capital to accumulate. The other is the tendency of population to outstrip the demand for employment. The most astonishing contrasts of poverty and riches are constantly increasing.

How is this condition of things to be obviated? The government must either make provision to support the people in idleness; or, it must arrest the law of population; or, it must organize labor. Since the first two alternatives are both impossible and unadvisable, the third alternative alone remains. On what principle, then, shall labor be organized so as to make it certain that the laborer shall never be without employment adequate for his support? The only way, Thornwell answered, is by converting

the laborer into capital by giving the employer a right of property in the labor employed. And this, he pointed out, is the underlying principle in slavery. The non-slaveholding States must either organize labor in some such way or else suffer insurrections against their system. As long as the demand for labor transcends the supply, all is well; capital and labor are mutual friends. But when it is no longer capital asking for labor, but labor asking for capital, then the tables are turned in deadly hostility. Southerners, he concluded, accept as a good and merciful constitution the organization of labor which Providence¹² has given them in Slavery.

Some of the Presbyterian anti-slavery advocates ridiculed this theory.¹³ Obviously it was not a little apologetic for the institution of slavery. It reveals, however, that Thornwell was informed along lines of labor organization. As remarkable as it is, a theologian in 1860 predicted the class-struggles, unemployment, and the role of government in relief and in social security which the twentieth century has witnessed. It is still a problem in labor organization to discover a method whereby the employer will be made financially interested in his employee in the contingencies of unemployment, accident, sickness and old age.

(5) Social Progress and Social Change. The capacity of human

¹² Collected Writings, iv, 540-541.

¹³ A. A. Thomas, ed., Anti-Slavery Correspondence of Thomas E. Thomas, p. 106.

individuals for improvement is the root of social progress. Growth, expansion and development of faculties are all so many changes for the better. Society, like the individual, is capable of improvement. True conservatism combines stability with the spirit of progress. It imitates time in that it is opposed to all violent disruptions or radical revolutions. It would have the past and the future so imperceptibly blended that they should coalesce without an absolute commencement or a sudden termination. In the establishment of institutions upon false assumptions, States reveal the ignorance and blindness of the sinful men who comprise them. Gradually such institutions are abandoned as enlightenment spreads. "These things . take place under the sleepless Providence of God, who is surely accomplishing His own great purposes, and who makes (even) the wrath of man to
¹⁴
 praise Him, . . . "

Thornwell did not regard progress as due simply to the evolutionary refinement of man's nature. The probability is, he thought, that among any cultivated people the degree to which the mind is developed is not essentially different in one age from what it is in another. In keenness of intellect the amateur in science today may be no greater than Newton, and yet be able to handle more advanced scientific problems simply because of the advance in knowledge between his day and our own. The progress is due to the contingency that we employ our faculties

under better advantages than our fathers did. No progressive development of human nature as it is, however, will ever conduct any individual or society to the condition of Divine excellence. This consummation requires transformation and renovation as well as education and progress. "We must be new creatures in Christ Jesus before we can be partakers of a Divine nature."¹⁵

As regards social change, Thornwell seems to favor only those methods by which gradual, almost imperceptible changes are effected "under the sleepless Providence of God." The Bible with its principles gives the sure foundations by which social radicalism, revolutions and uprisings may be avoided. Jesus was no stirrer up of strife, no mover of sedition. Christian knowledge inculcates contentment with our lot. It renders us comparatively indifferent to the inconveniences and hardships of time. Our Savior was content to leave the destruction of whatsoever was morally wrong in the social fabric to the slow process of changes in individual opinions, wrought by the silent influence of religion, rather than endanger the stability of governments by sudden and disastrous revolutions.

Scriptures rebuke alike the indifference which would repress improvement and stiffen society into a fixed and lifeless condition, and the spirit of impatience and innovation which despises the lessons of experience and rushes into visionary schemes of reformation. Thornwell wrote, in the midst of the trembling

1850's, "I confess frankly my apprehensions that, if . . . the supremacy of the Scriptures should be shaken in the popular mind, we have no security. . . . Give me storms, earth-quakes, and tornadoes, plague, pestilence and famine -- any form of evil that springs from the Providence of God -- but save me from that hell, the hearts of men where the fiends of foul delusion have taken up their lodgment. The Bible, the Bible is the great safe-guard of nations. . . . We must stand by the Scriptures or perish." ¹⁶

It has been said that Thornwell's "proposed method of preserving the privileged against social catastrophe was startlingly fascistic." ¹⁷ Yet he made a place in his theory of social change for revolution. Speaking to the South Carolina College community on the occasion of Calhoun's death, April 21, 1850, he said that society is a school in which the Deity is conducting a great process of education, Providential circumstances determine alike the lessons to be taught and the capacity of the scholars to learn them. Unfortunately, however, men are not apt in the art of learning. Therefore, the outbreaks of revolution, in extraordinary cases, are sometimes necessary to rouse the people and put ¹⁸ them in the attitude of progress.

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Collected Writings, iii, 181.

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H. Shelton Smith, "The Church and the Social Order in the Old South as Interpreted by James H. Thornwell," Church History, vol. vii, no. 2 (June 1938), p. 115.

¹⁸
J. H. Thornwell, Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis, p. 32.

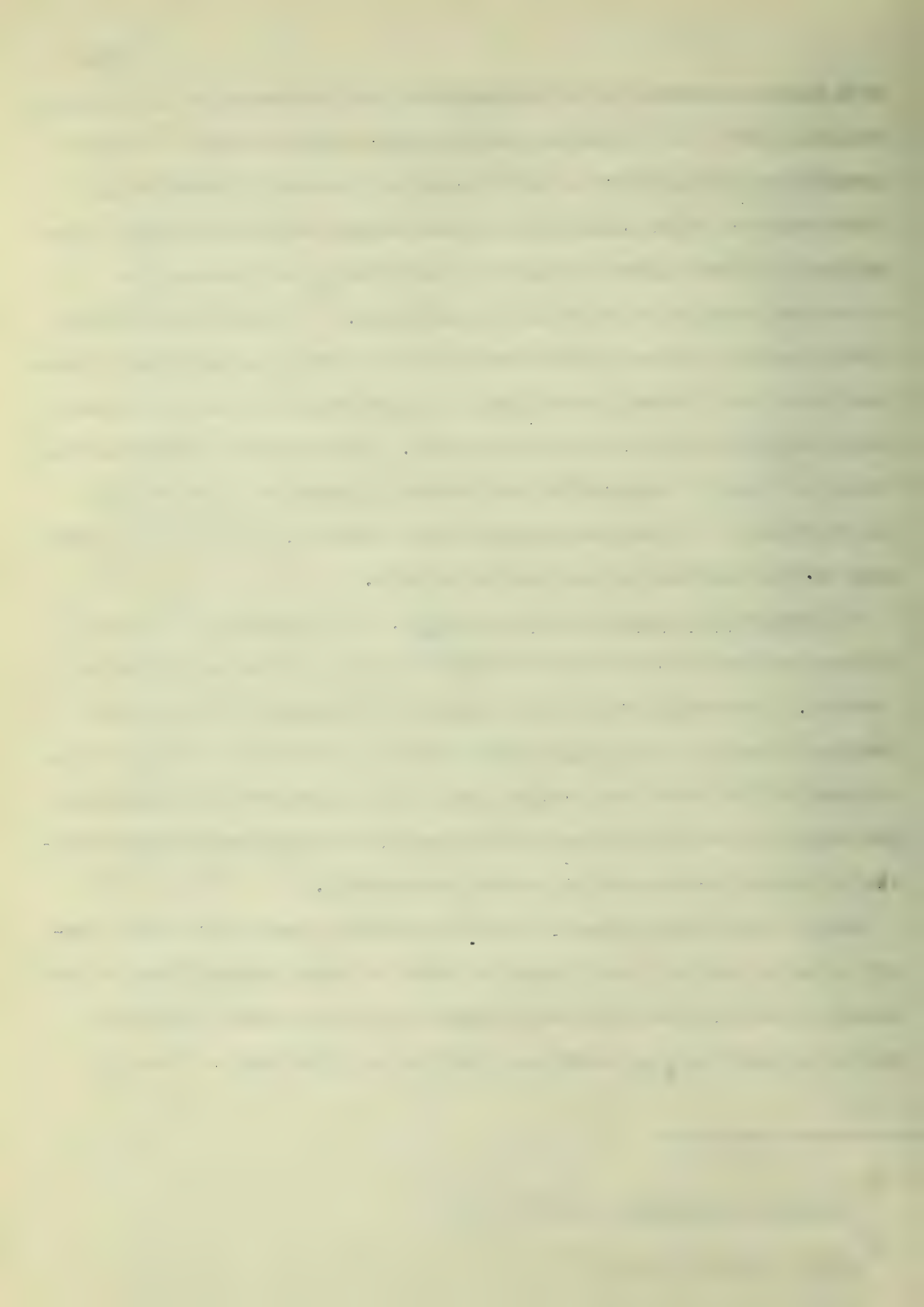
In a sermon preached to a congregation of slaveholders in Charleston, May 1850, he intimated that slavery might be one of those institutions which men in their ages of infancy, ignorance and blindness had established upon false maxims such as the one "that captivity in war gives a right to the life of a prisoner for which his bondage is accepted in exchange."¹⁹ Such institutions, though evils, are so intertwined with the very foundations of society that they cannot subsequently be extirpated without abandoning the real progress they have made. This aspect of Thornwell's theory of social change did not receive elaborate treatment in his writings; its single presentation, however, stands as a testimony to the honesty of the man's thought.

(6) The Principles of Social Ethics. The subject of social ethics is closely allied with that of social progress and social change. Thornwell explicitly stated that society is the only theatre in which moral capacities can be developed. As it is the purpose of God that man should live in a condition of society, He has made interest to coincide with duty, so that patronage of virtue²⁰ is the surest safeguard of public prosperity.

But by duty and virtue in this connection Thornwell meant simply a man's dealing with right as that is found objectively in the Being of God and with his conscience as, though that capacity, moral obligations are laid upon him as an individual. To apply

¹⁹ Collected Writings, iv, 431, 432.

²⁰ Ibid., ii, 234, 237.



ethical distinctions to forms of political organization, monarchies, despotisms and representative democracies, or to forms of social organization such as the suffrage of women, the liquor traffic or the system of slave labor Thornwell seems to have considered too ridiculously absurd to warrant investigation.

The Bible's law of love, condemnation of tyranny and oppression seem logically to involve the condemnation of slavery. But, Thornwell explained, the law of love is simply the inculcation of universal equity. It implies nothing as to the existence of various ranks and gradations in society. The interpretation which makes it repudiate slavery would make it equally repudiate all social, civil and political inequalities. All the law of love implies, he insisted, is that we should render unto others, the slaves, for example, precisely what, if the circumstances were reversed, it would be reasonable and just in us to demand²¹ at their hands.

The rights of any particular man must be ultimately traced to his duties. As the moral discipline of man is consistent with the greatest variety of external conditions, it is consistent with the greatest variety of contingent rights. Thus, the rights of a man are contingent upon his providentially given circumstances. No effort should be made either to alter the circumstances or to increase the number of a man's rights by increasing the sphere of his moral obligations. There may be rights not pos-

sessed by a member of the lower classes. They are not his, for the simple reason that they are contingent; they do not spring from humanity simply considered, for then they would belong to women and children, but from humanity in such and such relations.²²

The basic principle of social ethics is that every people has an inherent right to manage their affairs in their own way, so long as they keep within the limits of Divine Law. Applied to the South and slavery, Thornwell insisted that this meant:

If we fail in our social and political organizations, if, by consequence, we lag behind in the progress of nations, we do not forfeit our right to self-government and become the minors and wards of wiser and stronger States. It is as preposterous in our Northern and European brethren to undertake to force their system upon us, or to break up our own in obedience to their notions, as it would be in us to wage a war upon theirs, on the ground that ours is better. Slavery, as a political question, is one in regard to which communities and States may honestly differ.²³

The education of the ethical individual for liberty and virtue takes place in a vast providential scheme. God assigns to every man, by a wise and holy decree, through the contingency of time, place and circumstances of birth, the precise place he is to occupy in this great moral school of humanity. The individual is to be faithful to the station in life to which God, by Providence, has assigned him. Civil and social privileges, advantages of birth, rank and fortune are external circumstances. The important matter is what takes place within the individual. The high-

²² Ibid., iv, 426-427.

²³ Ibid., iv, 388, 396.

est development of this sort is the religious life. In this all that is required is a spirit of perfect contentment with our lot. "He who would quarrel with the present arrangement could never be satisfied," Thornwell concluded, "unless God should seat him²⁴ as an equal upon His throne, . . ."

(7) Problems in Social Ethics. The American temperance movement was started by Lyman Beecher in Litchfield, Connecticut, during the year 1825-1826.²⁵ Repercussions from it were soon felt in the South. In 1829 the students of the University of North Carolina formed a temperance society and in 1837 the possession of intoxicating liquors on that campus was made a dismissal offence.²⁶ In 1834 T. S. Grimke, president of the Charleston Temperance Society, delivered an address entitled, "The Temperance Reformation the Cause of Christian Morals."²⁷ In 1837 the Legislature of South Carolina passed an act "forbidding the sale of liquor to students as minors; drinking was the cause of the greatest disorders on the campus,²⁸ . . ." In a temperance address delivered in Columbia, July 4, 1854, Thornwell described drunkenness as "a conspiracy against the law of a refined civilization." He pointed out that this made prohibition a fitting subject of civil legislation if and when it could "be founded up-

²⁴ Ibid., i, 136, 133-317; iv, 414-418, 460-461.

²⁵ R. E. Thompson, The Hand of God in American History, pp. 120-121.

²⁶ Kemp P. Battle, History of the University of North Carolina, i, 340.

²⁷ T. S. Grimke, The Temperance Reformation the Cause of Christ-

on the moral convictions of the community, which alone enables
 a State to execute its penal code; . . . "

The Woman's Rights Reform, as the early phase of the women
 suffrage movement was called, emerged from the conservative op-
 position to women appearing on the abolition platform. The re-
 ply of Angelina Grimke Weld to Elizabeth Beecher's Essay on Slav-
ery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American
Females, 1837, marked the definite beginnings of the movement.
 Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century, a full dis-
 cussion of bi-sexual economic, social, political and marital
 equality, appeared amidst "respectable Boston bluestockings" in
 1844.³⁰

R. J. Breckinridge wrote a caustic review in his The Balti-
more Literary and Religious Magazine of the published proceedings
 of the first Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women held in
 New York City, May 9-12, 1837. He stated: "We sincerely hope
 that these excellent individuals, . . . having done enough for
 glory, . . . will hereafter be content to abide in the sphere which

ian Morals. Charleston, 1834.

²⁸
 E. L. Green, History of the University of South Carolina, p.
 49.

²⁹
 B. M. Palmer, The Life and Letters of J. H. Thornwell, D. D.,
LL. D., pp. 376-377.

³⁰
 V. L. Parrington, op. cit., pp. 432, 342n.

31

God has appointed for them." Breckinridge and Thornwell were in agreement on this subject. The latter felt that rights of property and of the ballot belong as little to women as they do to slaves or to children. He stated at Davidson College, August 1837, "It is enough to make good men stand aghast . . . when we see woman abandoning her proper sphere of usefulness and labor, violating at once the dictates of modesty and the long-settled customs of society and mingling in the smoke and the dust of the political arena."³²

Duelling was an important social issue especially in the earlier part of Thornwell's lifetime. On two occasions students at South Carolina College were expelled for participating in duels. Although Thornwell never treated of the subject publicly, he left record of his attitude against it. About 1858, after receiving word that there was a duel pending in which one of the principals was a former college student of his, Beaufort Watts Ball, Thornwell swore out a warrant for his arrest. A conference among the seconds settled the controversy without the necessity of actual combat.³³

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R. J. Breckinridge, "Man-Womanry: Abolition in the Female Gender," The Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine, vol. iii, no. 9 (September 1837), p. 411.

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J. H. Thornwell, Mss. Davidson College address, 1837, p. 33.

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Letter: W. W. Ball to Paul L. Garber, July 20, 1938. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 50. E. L. Green, op. cit., pp. 244-246. T. S. Perry, Life and Letters of Francis Lieber, p. 126.

II. Political Philosophy

(1) The Moral Nature of the State. The State is that organized society in which moral and responsible persons are related to each other with reciprocal rights and obligations. Apart from the men who constitute it, the State is nothing.³⁴ The State has no Divinely given form or constitution; these must be determined by human reason and the course of providential events. The State is not, thereby, to be considered a product of human ingenuity. Being founded in the God-given constitution of man as moral and social, and designed to realize the Divine idea of justice, the State is a Divine ordinance. Hence the State is under a strict responsibility to the Author and Source of justice and of law. To absolve the State from this responsibility is to destroy the firmest security of public order, to convert liberty into license, and to impregnate the very being of the common-wealth with the seeds of dissolution and decay.³⁵ Thornwell disagreed with the social contract theory of the State and with what he called "mobocracy", the State as the instrument of the will of the people.

If, therefore, the State is a moral institution, responsible to God and existing for ethical and spiritual ends, then it is capable of sin. Like the individual, it may sin by defect in

³⁴ J. H. Thornwell, Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis, pp. 20-21.

³⁵ Quoted in B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 588. Collected Writings, iv, 58-59, 449.

coming short of its duty, and sin by positive contradiction to it. The same laws regulate, and the same crimes disfigure, the intercourse of States with one another, which obtain in the case of individuals. These sins bring on the judgment of God in the form of national calamities. The consummation of a nation's sins is its fall. Thornwell listed as some national sins: profanity, Sabbath-breaking, Atheism and the failure to give to the under-privileged classes what is just and equal.³⁶ Hence, the State must be impressed with a profound sense of God's all-pervading Providence, and of its responsibility to Him. The powers that be are ordained of Him. "A State is bound to be religious, in the sense that every man in it is bound to fear God and to work righteousness. A State is bound to reverence the Gospel, . . . and a State is required to glorify God, . . ."³⁷

Thornwell felt that Christianity, without the distinctions of sects, is the religion of the United States in the sense that it is the great fountain of our national life. In 1861 he presented a paper to the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America in which he criticized the Constitution of the United States from the point of view of religion. He asserted that the document was not distinctively Christian. The founding fathers saw the human side of government clearly. But they failed to apprehend its Divine side, that all gov-

³⁶ Collected Writings, iv, 537-538.

³⁷ J. H. Thornwell, Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis, p. 22.

ernments are ordinances of God and that governmental officials are His ministers who must answer to Him for the execution of their trust. The consequence is that the people have been invested with a species of supremacy which is insulting to God. They have been made God. Thus the foundation is laid for the worst of all possible governments, a democratic absolutism.

If, then, the State is an ordinance of God, it should acknowledge the fact. Thornwell suggested that the Constitution of the Confederate States of America should not only acknowledge God as supreme but also His Son, Jesus Christ, as Ruler of the nations, King of kings and Lord of lords. Further, the Constitution would do well to accept the Scriptures as the Word of God. He explained that he did not mean that the State should become an enforcement officer for the Scriptures. But, he insisted, if the State believes the Scriptures to be true and regulates its conduct in conformity with their teachings, then, in its official constitution, it ought to acknowledge the fact. The effect of this action would not be to bind any man's conscience unduly. Yet it is for the State to limit its own powers negatively by the teachings of the Scriptures; nothing shall be done which they forbid. Thornwell hastened to add that his proposal had no reference to a union or alliance between the Church and the State. "But the separation of Church and State is a very different thing from the separation of religion and the State."³⁸

If in this critical statement Thornwell contradicted his theory of the nature of the Church, he yet touched upon a theme which has not been adequately discussed in American ecclesiastical circles since the last church establishment was dissolved.

(2) The Function and Form of Government. To protect and to defend the reciprocal rights and obligations of the individuals who compose the State, to maintain the supremacy of justice, to give each individual the scope for the development of his separate and distinct personality, with a similar privilege to others, -- these are the primary functions of government. Its end, in brief, is the establishment and maintenance of justice and the preservation of the rights of all.

The formation of constitutions as the institution of checks and balances upon the powers of both people and rulers, Thornwell considered the legitimate role of human reason and ingenuity. When rightly organized and rightly administered, he considered representative government to be justly regarded as the boast of modern civilization. He shared fully in the Old South's political ideal of a Greek democracy. He frequently quoted Milton's panegyric on a free commonwealth in which the claim is made that it is a form of government plainly enjoined by Christ. Its excel-

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J. H. Thornwell, Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis, pp. 20-21.

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Collected Writings, iv, 59, 60, 218. He recommended Francis Lieber's Political Ethics as presenting "a masterly exhibition of the real nature and advantages of Representative Government." Ibid., iv, 60n.

lence consists in the probability it furnishes that reason only shall sway. Reason is much more likely to prevail in a deliberative assembly composed of men who, coming from the people, know their interests, desires and fears and whose governing is not according to what the people wish but what is best for them.⁴¹

The two conditions necessary for a true representative government are: (a) knowledge of the circumstances and desires of the people such as is obtained through the free election of representatives by small communities within the nation and (b) a fixed purpose to aim at collective interests of the whole such as is projected by the establishment of a bicameral legislative body and similar checks and balances upon governmental power. These two features Thornwell considered of equal importance.⁴²

The danger of so-called democracy is from the passions and ignorance of the people. The danger of monarchy arises from the caprices, tyranny and ambition of the king. The danger of an oligarchy springs from the selfishness of the privileged classes. Power, Thornwell held, has a natural tendency to settle into despotism. The legitimate ends of the State may be as completely defeated by the absolute power of the people, in the absence of proper checks and restraints, as by the absolute power of a single ruler. Absolute power is tyranny, whether in the hands of

⁴¹ Ibid., iv, 57, 58, 68. See also V. L. Parrington, op. cit., pp. 123-124.

⁴² Ibid., iv, 60, 61.

large masses, of privileged orders or of single individuals. A government which aspires to be free has made but slender advances when it has only changed the seat of authority. Whatever the form of government, it must look to the interests of the people and, by restraining the State's sovereign power must maintain justice within organized society.⁴³

(3) A View of State Autonomy. Thornwell applied his principles of representative government to the situation in the United States. The Constitution he viewed as a solemn compact between the States. The powers delegated in it to the general Government cannot be prostituted to the injury or destruction of the peculiar institutions of any of the parties. Therefore, neither Executive nor the Congress possesses a shadow of a right to take any steps that shall have the effect of determining whether new territories, when they are prepared to be admitted into the Union, shall or shall not exclude slavery. What their relation to this subject shall be, is a question that must be left to the Providence of God. What the Southern States of the Union complain of is, that the influence of the Government is turned against them. Instead of preserving absolute neutrality, it takes sides and perverts its trust to cripple and circumscribe the South's peculiar institution of slavery.⁴⁴

The platform of the Republican party in 1860 Thornwell viewed

⁴³
Ibid., 59-60.

⁴⁴
Quoted in B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 574.

as contemplating negation of the Constitution's neutrality on slavery. The election of Lincoln, pledged to the principles of that party, seemed to him to present to the South a new and a different Constitution than that of 1787. The national Constitution had been trampled under foot and a sectional one set up in its stead. The South, he told the assembled citizens of Columbia, South Carolina, in January 1861, is being asked: "Will you submit to this new constitution or not?" "Secession is only refusing to abolish the old and adopt the new constitution now being presented to us by the black Republican party."⁴⁵ It cannot, therefore, be unconstitutional. Thornwell also felt that, through abolition agitation, justice was no longer dominant in the Federal courts nor impartiality possible in the Federal legislation. Therefore, the South, for the preservation of justice⁴⁶ and for her own interests, was forced into secession.

"It is needless to say that, in this issue," Thornwell wrote in January 1861, "the personal character of Mr. Lincoln is not at all involved. . . . He is probably entitled, in his private relations of life, to all the commendations which his friends have bestowed upon him. . . . The issue has respect, not to the man, but to the principles upon which he is elected to administer the Government, . . . His election seals the triumph of these

⁴⁵ Report on Thornwell's speech by a student of Columbia seminary, North Carolina Presbyterian, vol. iv, no. 1 (January 5, 1861) p. 2.

⁴⁶ Collected Writings, iv, 525-535; especially p. 535.

principles, and that triumph seals the subversion of the Constitution, in relation to a matter of paramount interest to the South."⁴⁷

In Our Danger and Our Duty, 1862, he wrote: "we are fully persuaded that the triumph of the North in the present conflict will be as disastrous to the hopes of mankind as to our own fortunes. They are now fighting the battle of despotism. . . . The avowed end of the present war is, to make the Government a government of force. It is to settle the principle that, whatever may be its corruptions and abuses, however tyrannical its legislation, there is no redress, except in vain petition or empty remonstrance."⁴⁸

Convinced of this as a fact to be faced, Thornwell concluded that the South must not only secede but must also defend herself by arms if forced to remain in the Union against her will. He, with others in the South, failed to see that behind secession theory lay a traditional Southern interpretation of the Constitution which, as involving a principle of State atomism, provided an unstable basis for Union. The impracticality of the States Rights dogma was revealed ultimately in the lack of cooperation between the States of the Confederacy during the war. This led to the internal collapse which hastened the defeat of the South-

⁴⁷ Quoted in B. M. Palmer, op. cit., 595.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Ibid., p. 582.

, ern armies.

III. Thornwell and Politics

Thornwell, one writer stated, "in politics advocated extreme southern views."⁵⁰ Another wrote, "He was an active advocate of secession."^{50a} These statements are misleading. It is more accurate to say that, until 1860, Thornwell and the institution which most completely reflected his attitudes, the Columbia Theological Seminary, were constantly calling South Carolina to patience, Christian longsuffering and forbearance and to peaceful methods of improving strained relations.⁵¹ Thornwell did endorse secession but only after it had become a choice between being loyal to his State and being loyal to the Union. In that choice, he, being an ardent Southerner, felt he was left no alternative.

(1) Before 1860. Thornwell's own conception of his political position is given with characteristic humor in these words taken from one of his letters: "You know that I always was perverse in politics. I was not a Nullifier in South Carolina and I could

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F. L. Owsley, States Rights in the Confederacy, p. 12.

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Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography, vi, 105.

50a

E. K. Graham, art. in The South in the Building of the Nation, ix, 68.

51

William C. Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, p. 41.

not have been a Repudiator in Mississippi." ⁵² The reference is to a thirty-page article which he wrote for a newspaper in 1832. Unfortunately copies of the newspaper in which this article appeared have been completely lost. ⁵³ In 1845 Thornwell wrote from Wheeling, West Virginia, to his wife: "I am satisfied that the mission of our Republic will not be accomplished until we embrace in our Union the whole of this North American continent. . . . it would be better for this country . . . to give up New England, (rather) than to abandon any new territory . . . You see that I am grasping at territory." ⁵⁴

In his sermon preached on the occasion of Calhoun's death, April 1850, in his Charleston sermon on slavery, May 1850, and in an article published in the Southern Presbyterian Review, January 1851, Thornwell pointed to the faults of the South as well as to those of the North. ⁵⁵ While protesting his supreme devotion to his State, he insisted that the effort should be made to preserve the Union in its original character. "I cannot disguise the conviction," he stated, "that the dissolution of the Union -- as a

⁵² B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 479.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 93. William C. Robinson, op. cit., p. 40.

⁵⁴ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵⁵ J. H. Thornwell: (1) Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis. Columbia, S. C.: A. S. Johnston, 1850. (2) "The Rights and Duties of Masters" which sermon appears as "The Christian Doctrine of Slavery" in Collected Writings, iv, 398-436. (3) "Critical Notices," reprinted as Appendix I in B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 573-580.

political question -- is the most momentous which can be proposed in the present condition of the world."⁵⁶

The prospect of disunion is one which I cannot contemplate without absolute horror. . . . And a war between the States of this confederacy would, in my opinion, be the bloodiest, most ferocious and cruel, in the annals of history. . . . [The formation of a new government] in this age of tumults, agitation, and excitement, when socialism, communism, and a rabid mobocracy seem everywhere to be in the ascendent, will lead to the most dangerous experiments, the most disastrous schemes. . . . Vain in this crisis, is the help of man. . . . May the Lord mercifully turn the tide.⁵⁷

In December 1854, Thornwell, then President of South Carolina College, was appointed to preach before the Legislature of the State. He entitled the discourse Judgments, A Call for Repentance.⁵⁸ He did not mention secession. He merely indicated those sins which rulers might commit by which they brought down upon themselves and upon those whom they ruled the judgments of God. Lest any should mistake his sentiments, however, he made this statement introductory to his other remarks, "With God for us,⁵⁹ it would matter little who or what was against us." The Legislature was then considering whether it would be better to secede immediately and alone or later and in cooperation with other Southern states. It is hardly likely that his statement failed to bear its political implication.

⁵⁶ J. H. Thornwell, Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis, p. 6.

⁵⁷ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 477.

⁵⁸ J. H. Thornwell, Judgments, A Call to Repentance. Published by the Legislature. Columbia, S. C.: Gibbes, 1854.

A year later, 1855, he was privately indicating his approval of the American political party. Lieber called it "a very wretched affair . . . the child of Calvinistic bitterness."⁶⁰ In 1856 Thornwell took over the editorship of the Southern Quarterly Review, removing from the political arena a journal which, under the editorship of William Gilmore Simms, had been the South Carolina voice of Beverly Tucker "to further the cause" of spreading⁶¹ hatred of industrialism and misunderstanding of the North. Meanwhile, the Southern Presbyterian Review was being considered⁶² an able defender and exponent of the Southern States.

(2) After 1860. While in Europe during the summer of 1860, Thornwell saw that secession was inevitable. When he returned, he did everything in his power to promote it. "I gave up the Union with great pain," he wrote afterward, "but I saw no alternative. Black Republicanism had rendered it impossible to remain in it with honour."⁶³

His secession activities began with a sermon entitled "National Sins" preached in Columbia on November 21, 1860, a month prior to the secession ordinance and only shortly after the elec-

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁰ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 479. T. S. Perry, op. cit., p. 27.

⁶¹ V. L. Parrington, op. cit., pp. 38-40.

⁶² The South Carolinian (Columbia, S. C.) vol. x, no. 8 (February 8, 1848), p. 2.

⁶³ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 498.

tion of Lincoln. It was published in the Southern Presbyterian Review almost immediately. At the meeting of the Synod of South Carolina three weeks before the secession ordinance was adopted, Thornwell assisted the committee whose report, as finally adopted, declared that it was time for the people of South Carolina to "imitate their revolutionary forefathers and stand up for their rights."⁶⁴

In January 1861, he wrote an article for the Southern Presbyterian Review on "The State of the Country." The same month Charles Hodge published an article under the same title in the Princeton Review. Thornwell wrote a friend in Philadelphia about his own article: "Every day convinces me more and more that (in seceding) we acted at the right time and in the right way. . . . I have just concluded a defense of the secession of the Southern States, which . . . to me appears to be conclusive." "I shall have a large edition in pamphlet form struck off."⁶⁵ On January 4, 1861, Thornwell spoke before a meeting in Columbia called to ratify the action of the Convention in seceding. It is the testimony of his contemporaries that "many were led into approval of the State's action by his eloquent pleas."⁶⁶

(3) During the War. Anticipating the outbreak of armed con-

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Quoted by F. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850, p. 76.

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B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 486-487.

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Editorial, The Presbyterian, (Philadelphia), August 23, 1862.

flict, Thornwell wrote in "The State of the Country," "The very women of the South, like the Spartan matrons, will take hold of shield and buckler, and our boys at school will go to the field in all the determination of disciplined valour." He spoke of the war's futility. "And after years of blood and slaughter, the parties would be just where they began, except that they would have learned to hate each other with an intensity of hatred equalled only in hell." Freedom, religion, learning, and every human interest will suffer from such a war. "But," he asked, "upon whose head would the responsibility fall? There can be but one answer. We solemnly believe that the South will be guiltless before the eyes of the Judge of all the earth."⁶⁷

Believing in the defensive character of the war as far as the South was concerned, Thornwell threw himself into the service of the Southern cause "with a zeal second to that of no other man in the Southern Confederacy."⁶⁸ He gave to the army his eldest son, Gillespie Robbins, who, at the age of eighteen and a half years, offered to the Confederacy "his last full measure of devotion."⁶⁹ During the winter of 1861 - 1862, in frequent communications to the daily press, he sought to animate the people to maintain in the struggle in which they were engaged. These

⁶⁷ Quoted in B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 609.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 479.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 521.

articles were gathered into a religio-political pamphlet, entitled Our Danger and Our Duty, which was circulated widely throughout the South and among the soldiers of the Southern armies.⁷⁰ The purpose of this writing was to depict the terror of possible defeat and the spirit which should motivate every citizen of the commonwealth. Its tenor is indicated by this excerpt:

We occupy a sublime position. The eyes of the world are upon us; we are a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men. Can our hearts grow faint, or our hands feeble, in a cause like this? The spirits of our fathers call to us from their graves. The heroes of other ages and other countries are beckoning us on to glory. Let us seize the opportunity, and make to ourselves an immortal name, while we redeem a land from bondage, and a continent from ruin. FINIS.⁷¹

In 1887 a Northern reprint of Our Danger and Our Duty was copyrighted in Washington under the title "Fanaticism -- With Little Reason, Science or Common Sense, Unmasks Itself." Dr. J. D. Hale, the editor, added as a subtitle these two sentences: "Opposition to reason is really madness. Had he lived, Dr. Thornwell might have been rewarded with a foreign mission."⁷² The pamphlet is replete with footnotes in which the editor recorded various reported cruelties to Southern Union sympathizers committed by the Confederate authorities and their followers. Hale's

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 513.

⁷¹ Quoted in ibid., pp. 514-515.

⁷² J. D. Hale, ed., J. H. Thornwell's Our Danger and our Duty published under the title "Fanaticism -- With Little Reason, Science or Common Sense, Unmasks Itself." n. p., n. p., copyright date, 1887. Library of Congress.

primary purpose in reprinting the pamphlet seems to have been to protest against mercy being shown by the Federal Government to those Southern leaders who participated in the formation and defense of the Confederacy.

Thornwell carried on his most intense political activity while, as he wrote a friend, he was "not worth a chew of tobacco."⁷³ His traditional physical weakness coupled with the intensity with which he went about his ordinary and extraordinary activities, brought about his death at the age of fifty years. Breckinridge had warned him twenty years before, "Men like you rarely live to be old," "the blade is too sharp for the scabbard!"⁷⁴ It was, perhaps, providential that Thornwell should have died during a time of great conflict. In the last letter he wrote to his wife he expressed a sentiment typical of his social and political thinking when he said, " . . . our true rest must be sought in another world. May the Lord prepare us for it."⁷⁵

⁷³ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 516.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 235.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 519.

Chapter VI

The Nature of the Christian Church and Its Relation to Society

I. The Church

- 1. The Nature of the Church
- 2. The Unity of the Church
- 3. The Church and the Individual
- 4. The Social Function of the Church
- 5. Missions
- 6. Religious Education

II. Church Polity

- 1. The Nature of Church Polity
- 2. An Interpretation of
Presbyterianism
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- 1. The Churches and the War
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Chapter VI

I. The Church

(1) The Nature of the Church. The Church, Thornwell held, is not an accidental society that owes its existence to the voluntary compact of its members like a political or moral organization. It is a society which has grown up out of the facts of redemption. It is the body of Christ. The idea of the Church is the complete realization of the decree of election. It is the whole body of the elect considered as united to Christ their Head.

The visible Church is the society or congregation of those who profess the true religion, among whom the Gospel is faithfully preached and the sacraments duly administered. It is simply because such a society cannot be destitute of some genuine believers, that it is entitled to the name of the Church. It finds in the Bible not only its message and its raison d'être but also its very constitution. The Church of Christ has both a divinely given doctrine and a divinely given form of organization.

The Church is "the institute of God."¹

The view that the Church is a humanly formed organization Thornwell considered the result of Protestant sectarianism, an ignoring of the Church's Divine constitution, historic connection with the facts of redemption, and organic unity as the supernatural product of the Holy Spirit.² The theory he advanced is one which has its historical rootage in the Puritan thought of sixteenth century England. Thomas Cartwright, the central thinker of the movement of that time, contended that such matters as ritual, altars and orders as well as the ministerial hierarchy, having no Scriptural authority, were thereby condemned in a true Church of God. Thornwell recognized the Puritan strain in the theory of the Church which he adopted and maintained.

X Speaking before the General Assembly in 1860, he stated that this binding limitation of church-power, as his theory had been termed, was the very point in dispute between the Puritans and the Church of England. And we today, he continued, are standing up for the same principle, namely, that "the Church has no right to act except as she has the authority of God for acting."³

From investigations of historical South Carolina Presbyterianism made by W. H. Mills, it is clear that in 1787 this neo-Puri-

¹ Collected writings, i, 44; iv, 350-351. See also the Centennial Addresses, pp. 35, 37.

² Ibid., i, 45.

³ Ibid., iv, 222.

tan view of the Church's nature and function was not commonly held by members of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia. Indeed, it was not until 1836 that the Synod denied to the Church authority to speak and to legislate upon subjects, such as slavery, which are not condemned by the Bible. Professor Mills is inclined to the position that Thornwell was not responsible for effecting this "complete reversal of position."⁴ However this may be, the change took place at the very time when attacks were beginning to be made upon the institution of slavery. This fact tends to cast some suspicion upon whether the change was effected upon unbiased scholarly convictions alone.

Whatever the source of this sudden popularity among southern Presbyterians for Puritan church theory, Thornwell adopted it for his own and, in theory, maintained nothing contrary to it throughout his lifetime. He wrote that this conception of the province of the Church had never been adequately realized with the result that Christ had been expelled from the pulpits, and that the only gospel which was left was that of the Age of Reason. "So strong are my convictions as to the adequacy of the Church as organized in the Scriptures to meet all exigencies," he stated, "that, if it can be clearly shown that she is incompetent to discharge any office assumed to be imperative upon her, I should think it much more probable that the duty was not enjoined, than that the Church was thus relatively imperfect. What she clearly cannot do is not⁴ commanded."

⁴ Ibid., iv, 186; ii, 46. W. H. Mills, "South Carolina's Contributions to our Presbyterian Heritage," Appendix, *Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina*, 1936, pp. 64, 68.

(2) The Unity of the Church. Thornwell insisted upon the unity of the Church. As the body of Christ, the Church is one. The members of it differ as to their functions, but they are one by virtue of their union to Christ their Head. True believers constitute one organized whole, which is the Holy Catholic Church.

In 1856, while he was concerned with the problem of holding the northern and southern sections of the Presbyterian church together, he wrote that if the Holy Catholic Church is one, the visible Church must also be one. The relation between the two is so close that it is unwarrantable to predict unity of the one and want of unity of the other. The visible or professing Church approaches perfection as it seeks to realize the unity of the invisible or spiritual Church.⁵ But in 1861, in his formulation of the southern Presbyterian church's apology for separate establishment, he asserted:

The Church catholic is one in Christ, but it is not necessarily one visible, all-absorbing organization upon earth. . . . As the unity of the human race is not disturbed by its division into countries and nations, so the unity of the spiritual seed of Christ is neither broken nor impaired by separation and division into various church-constitutions. . . . [Organization along national lines] realizes to the Church catholic all the advantages of a division of labour. . . . What is lost in expansion is gained in energy. The Church catholic, as thus divided, and yet spiritually one -- divided, but not rent -- is a beautiful illustration of the great philosophical principle which pervades all nature -- the co-existence of the one with the many.⁶

⁵
Ibid., iv, 135.

⁶
Ibid., iv, 453.

Thornwell asserted that, because of the unity of the visible Church, every single unit of the "true Church" in its "healthful and regular" actions, performs the acts for the universal Church. "The voice of the part, properly expressed, is the voice of the whole. He who is called by a single congregation is called by the entire Church; Every Pastor is a Minister of the whole; . . . "

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The authority of any part or of the whole of the Church is all ministerial and declarative. She only declares the law of the

Lord, and only exercises the powers He gives, and only executes the work He enjoins. That is to say, the Church as a visible institution is subject to the will of Christ in all things. "She is a positive institution, and there ore must show a definite warrant for everything that she does. It is not enough that her measures are not condemned. They must be positively sanctioned by the power which ordains her, or they are null and void. Like the Congress of the United States, she acts under a written Constitution, and must produce her written authority for all she

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undertakes." The Church can only execute what God enjoins, and can teach as faith and duty only what God reveals. In the case of evil, she has a positive right to condemn; in every other she

⁷ Ibid., iv, 39.

⁸ Ibid., iv, 210, 219.

has only the negative right not to disapprove.⁹

(3) The Church and the Individual. The Church of Jesus Christ is a group of personal beings to which have been given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life. It is the instrumentality of the Saviour, through which He dispenses salvation. Its ends are holiness and life, and not simply morality, decency and good order. The laws of the Church are the authoritative injunctions of Christ. The ground of obligation is the authority of God speaking His Word. In the Church the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners, and no church judicatory ought to make laws without the warrant, explicitly or implicitly, of the revealed will of God. The Church is exclusively a spiritual organization. Its great aim is to deliver men from sin and death and hell. The Church deals with men as fallen sinners standing in the need of salvation, not as citizens of the State, nor as members of society at large. Her mission is to bring men to the cross, and then send them forth to perform their social duties.¹⁰

Thornwell concluded that God cannot be expected to bless anything but His own truth. Just in proportion as the true faith of the Gospel is enforced and inculcated by the members of the Church, just in the same proportion will the Church be edified

⁹ Ibid., ii, 46; iv, 163, 244, 246.

¹⁰ Ibid., iv, 469-470, 473-474.

and sinners born into the kingdom of God.

Becoming a member of the Church, like association with any other social group, he considered an act which alters the character of the individual involved. But becoming united with Christ through the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit uniquely makes the believer a member of the very Body of Christ. The believer is no longer to be viewed as a solitary individual. He is a member of a great and glorious community, and his efforts must be aimed at the welfare of that whole community on earth as well as of himself. The Church is the light of the world. Upon the conduct of every professing Christian much depends in regard to the brilliancy or dimness with which that light shall shine. There should be no spots on this moral sun.¹²

(4) The Social Function of the Church. In its social function, the Church is not a moral institute of universal good. It has no commission to construct society afresh. The problems, which the anomalies of our fallen state are continually forcing on philanthropy, the Church has no right directly to solve. She must leave them to the Providence of God, and to human wisdom sanctified and guided by the spiritual influences which she fosters. The Church is a very peculiar society; she has a fixed and unalterable Constitution. The Bible alone is her rule of faith and practise. To that law and to that testimony and to them alone, she must always appeal. When they are silent, it is her duty to

11

Ibid., ii, 400-401.

12

Ibid., ii, 399.

put her hand upon her lips. When she speaks, it must be in the name of the Lord, for her only argument is Thus it is written. She "has no commission to make the poor rich, or the rich poor, the bond free, nor the free bond; it is not her province to subvert monarchies and institute republics, nor to overturn republics and establish despotism; she is to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's!"¹³

The Church, as such, is spiritual, and confined in its activities to that realm. But spiritual life enters into all relations of man, and Christianizes all his institutions. Hospitals and lunatic asylums, for example, partake of its molding influence. The Church gives the life; the concrete forms in which that life is to appear are left to the Providence of God to determine. "Let the Church work on at the very foundations of moral and spiritual influences, which are the foundations of society, let her appropriate work, and she will sanctify the world."¹⁴

It is the Church's mission to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men from the curse of the law. She has nothing to do with voluntary associations of men for various civil and social purposes such as Bible societies, anti-slavery societies and temperance unions. If she undertakes to meddle with the things of Caesar, she must expect to be crushed by the sword of Caesar. She is of God, and if she forgets that it is her Divine prerogative

¹³ Ibid., iv, 382-384, 456, 502.

¹⁴ Ibid., iv, 475, 477-478.

tive to speak in the name and by the authority of God, she must expect to be treated as a babbler.¹⁵

For church members to join these societies or to support philanthropic causes is a matter of Christian liberty. For the Church officially to endorse organized social movements involved, Thornwell thought, a principle which would result, if pushed to its legitimate consequences, in the subjection of the State to the Church. Every interest of man would be brought under the power of the Church.¹⁶

(5) Missions. Thornwell shared in the missionary enthusiasm of his day. Reporting the General Assembly of 1847 for the Southern Presbyterian Review, he wrote that missions is an object worthy of the Church's efforts. Any body which professes the name of Christ, and looks with cold indifference on the moral desolations of the world, he said, is a stranger to the spirit of the Gospel, profoundly ignorant of the true vocation of the Church and has reason to tremble at the righteous judgment of her Lord. A Church which cannot send the Gospel to the heathen is self-condemned; a Church which will not send it is dead.¹⁷

(6) Religious Education. Thornwell considered religious education a true function of the organized Church. The Church of

¹⁵ Ibid., ii, 44-45; iv, 473.

¹⁶ Ibid., iv, 475.

¹⁷ Ibid., iv, 494; ii, 48, 431.

God, as a visible institute, he wrote, is made up of two classes of members. This results from the very nature of its organization through families. One class consists of true believers, and the other of their children who are to be trained for God. The latter are to be retained as pupils until they are converted. This host of baptized children is the source from which the Church's strength is constantly recruited. "The Church contains a sanctuary and an outer court. True believers are in the sanctuary; others in the outer court, and the sanctuary is constantly filled from the court."¹⁸

In Thornwell's day the Sunday School was not a part of the activities of the typical local Church. It is not clear that he envisaged any such possibility in the plan of educational evangelism implied in his writings. Yet he gave certain principles upon which a system of religious education, as we understand that term, might be conceived.

The Presbyterian Catechisms are obviously a guide, a rule, a measure of the Scripture's teachings. They contain exactly what the Church wants all her children trained to understand and practise. Young Christians, upon their admission to the Church, are not required to adopt them, for they are pupils to be taught, and pupils are not supposed to be familiar with the science which they are appointed to learn. But all the teachers are expressly required to teach only according to this summary. The Catechisms

reduce the principal instructions of Scripture to the two heads of faith and duty. They articulately declare what is taught in reference to each. They omit only those parts of the Bible which do not fall under either of these categories. But there is no hint that they have selected only the principal points pertaining to the topics they have undertaken to expound. They have given the whole essence of Bible doctrines and Bible morality.¹⁹

The foundations, teaching material and curriculum of any scheme of religious education which Thornwell would approve must consist solely and entirely of the Catechisms, or of what is explicitly consistent with them.

II. Church Polity

Like Calvin, Thornwell's chief work was in the field of Ecclesiastics.²⁰ His major contribution to the thought of the Presbyterian church lies in his views concerning its polity.

(1) The Nature of Church Polity. The distinction is broad and clear, Thornwell held, between the Church in its essence as the mystical body of Christ and the form in which it is rendered

¹⁹ Ibid., iv, 368.

²⁰ J. B. Adger, art., "Memorial of J. H. Thornwell, D. D., LL. D." Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C., 1884, p. 190.

visible to men. Polity is far from being indispensable to the true Church. No man or group of men are to be unchurched because of their differences on questions of polity. Yet the admission that questions of government are subordinate in importance to questions of faith does not imply that they are of no value. Whatever God has thought proper to reveal becomes man to study. We wish to study the whole will of God. None should be content with striving simply to save his soul; he should strive to be perfect in all the will of God. That obligation, Thornwell insisted, is an ample vindication for repeated efforts to explain and enforce the peculiarities of Divine polity, and to resist all schemes and contrivances in contradiction to it.²¹

(2) An Interpretation of Presbyterianism. The term Presbyterianism when applied to Church polity had in Thornwell's thought a narrower and a broader significance. The broader meaning denies that church government is in the hands of an order higher than Presbyters or Elders. It connotes the opposite of the Episcopal type of church organization. In the more restricted sense of the term, Presbyterianism refers to that form of government in which authority is vested solely in representative assemblies, composed²² exclusively of Elders.

The principles of Presbyterianism, in the latter sense of the term, are: (a) The unity of the Church is found in the fact of

²¹ Collected Writings, iv, 294.

²² Ibid., iv, 135.

its being the Body of Christ. (b) This unity is realized within the visible Church by representative assemblies. The representative principle is alike the Church's bond of union and medium of common action. (c) Those who make up the representative assemblies are Elders, men chosen by the people in free elections for the purpose of ruling in church affairs. (d) The power of the Church is primarily in the body of the Church at large and is exercised through organized courts. "Let it not be understood," Thornwell hastened to add, "that . . . we unchurch other evangelical denominations. . . . We cheerfully and cordially hold fellowship with all Christ's people. But the principles which have been presented lie at the foundation of the complete organization of the Church of Christ."²³

In Church polity, this is the real question: Did Christ give the Church all the furniture she needed, or did He partially supply her, with a general direction to make up the deficiency? For himself, Thornwell could give an affirmative answer only to the first of these alternatives. He protested against the principle that expediency is any measure of duty or obligation in the Church of God. "We are not ashamed," he wrote as spokesman for the southern Presbyterian church, "to confess that we are intensely Presbyterian."²⁴ The power of the ius divinum Presbyterii has never effectually been tried. Its full strength can never be de

²³ Ibid., iv, 135, 136-138.

²⁴ Ibid., iv, 463; see also pp. 167, 175, 186.

eloped until the people shall be brought to feel that the Church is an institute of God. Yet, as intensely Presbyterian as he proclaimed himself to be, Thornwell held that Presbyterian doctrines give no protection to bigotry.

We are as consistent in our ecclesiastical fellowship, for example, with the Methodist Episcopal Church, while we regret their peculiar features of government as unlawful and unscriptural, as we are in our Christian fellowship with Methodist believers, while we regret as grossly contradictory to Scripture, their Arminian creed. We, therefore, unchurch no sect that does not unchurch itself by refusing to hold the Head. We can make the distinction between a defective and a perfect Church -- between the essentials and the accidents of government.²⁵

The Roman Catholic Church procures unity in the Church through a hierarchy of the priesthood. The unity of the Presbyterian Church is achieved through a system of representative assemblies. These bodies, General Assembly, the Synods, the Presbyteries and the local Church Sessions, are often termed church courts or councils. The government of the Church, Thornwell wrote, is not entrusted to individuals, nor to the mass of believers, but to councils. There is but one Church, a set of congregations bound together by the nexus of one parliament. Each congregation has every element of the universal Church. The universal Church has no attribute which may not be found in each congregation. "There is no organic difference between the Church-Session and the largest Assembly. All the courts recognize the unity of the whole body.²⁶ It is certainly a beautiful system."

²⁵ Ibid., iv, 293, 23.

²⁶ Ibid., iv, 137.

Such a representational system is the direct appointment of Christ. The powers and duties of the ecclesiastical representatives are prescribed and defined in the Word of God, the real Constitution of the Church. The church courts are the spiritual guardians of the people. They are under obligation to do what is best for the people as that is revealed in Scriptures. Thornwell justified for the church courts, as moral schoolmasters, the right of inquiry of the people in reference to their conduct. The duty of the Elders, as members of the Church courts, is to study and administer the laws of Christ, and not bend to the caprices of the people. Christ never gave to the people, as a mass, any right to exercise jurisdiction or to administer discipline. The business of the people is to elect the men who give sufficient evidence that they are fitted by the Spirit to fill the offices which Christ has appointed. The courts act in a triple capacity as legislative, judicial and executive bodies. The representatives which comprise them are equally Elders. The fact that one class of them, the Teaching Elders or Ministers, exercise some offices which the other class, the Ruling Elders or elected Lay Representatives, do not, is a contingency which does not alter the parity of their offices.

There was no time during the span of Thornwell's influence in the Old School Presbyterian Church when his neo-Puritan principles were dominant in it. That possibility was most nearly approximated in the General Assembly in Nashville, Tennessee, in

²⁷ Ibid., iv, 101-103, 304-305.

1855. The ascendance which Thornwell's views obtained then was immediately attacked by Charles Hodge, by other Princetonians and by Thomas Smyth of Charleston, as "a novelty, an innovation" and "inexpedient."²⁸ On the floor of the General Assembly in 1860, Hodge charged Thornwell's views of Church polity as "hyper-Hyper-Hyper-HIGH-Presbyterianism" and added, "It is this doctrine against which my whole soul revolts . . . this is a doctrine to which I am persuaded Presbyterians will never submit."²⁹ A Dr. Boardman, expressing his agreement with Hodge, termed Thornwell's position, "Levitical in the extreme."³⁰ Thornwell replied, " . . . my brother (Hodge) has said that my principles are 'hyper-Hyper-Hyper-HIGH-Presbyterianism' and I must retort that his principles are no-No-NO Presbyterianism, no-No-NO Churchism! His speech . . . presented us with a little touch of democracy, a little touch of prelacy, and a considerable slice of quakerism, but no Presbyterianism."³¹ But he concluded by stating that he would submit to whatever view the General Assembly as a whole accepted believing that submission was his duty even though he might not agree with the polity adopted.³²

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See the Appendix to Collected Writings, iv, 589.

29

J. B. Adger, "General Assembly of 1860", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. xiii, no. 2 (July 1860), pp. 380, 389.

30

Ibid., p. 393.

31

Ibid., p. 380.

32

Ibid., p. 381.

(3) The Book of Discipline. Although certain Presbyterian leaders disagreed with Thornwell's principles of Presbyterianism, they respected his skill as church-lawyer. In 1857 he was named chairman of a committee of General Assembly to revise certain parts of the Church's Book of Discipline. C. Van Rensselaer of Philadelphia, Moderator of that General Assembly, who appointed the committee, recorded in print his opinion that Thornwell was the only man whom he thought capable of fulfilling that obligation.³³ In 1859 Thornwell published the results of the committee's labor with the comment that the new book was a real improvement upon the old in that it had reduced the Discipline to a logical completeness and coherence which it did not profess before.³⁴ Van Rensselaer, reviewing this publication before the meeting of the Assembly of 1859 to which it was first submitted, expressed his gratitude for what the committee had done. But, he charged, the "committee has gone far beyond the point in revision than the public mind has gone in being ready to revise it."³⁵ He concluded that the Assembly should take action in accordance with public sentiment in the church. The Assembly of 1859 decided to recommit the work to the committee. The work was still incomplete when the northern and southern sections of

³³ C. Van Rensselaer, Revision of the Book of Discipline of the Presbyterian Church, 1859, p. 1.

³⁴ Collected Writings, iv, 334.

³⁵ C. Van Rensselaer, op. cit., p. 23.

the Church separated in 1861. Both denominations separately took up the work of revision but in neither case did any significant revision emerge.³⁶

(4) The Elder Question. Thornwell considered the parity of the Elders to be one of the peculiar principles of Presbyterianism. Robert J. Breckinridge brought the question before the public in 1841 with an article entitled, "The Right of Ruling Elders in the Presbyterian Church to lay hands, in all Presbyterian ordinations."³⁷ In this article Breckinridge challenged the custom among the Presbyteries of barring Ruling Elders from the privilege of laying their hands upon the heads of the ministerial candidates being ordained by the Presbyteries. The matter came before the General Assembly of 1843 and was decided against Breckinridge upon grounds that obviously the Ruling Elders could not impart to the candidate a type of ordination which they themselves had not received.³⁸ This decision, Thornwell wrote Breckinridge shortly after the Assembly's adjournment, "took me by surprise. The matter must be discussed before the churches, . . . It involves a principle which lies at the very foundation of our system."³⁹ He immediately prepared an article on the subject for Breckinridge's magazine.

³⁶ Collected Writings, iv, 298

³⁷ The Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine. vol. vii, (1841), pp. 169-171.

³⁸ Minutes of the (O. S.) General Assembly, 1843, p. 196.

³⁹ B. M. Palmer, Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell, D. D., LL. D., p. 253.

This he followed with another in 1848 on the subject in the Southern Presbyterian Review and with sermons on "Presbyterianism and the Eldership" preached in Columbia, 1856, and in Charleston, 1861.⁴⁰

The argument which he presented was that there are two phases in Presbytery's function of ordination: (a) examination of the candidate for his ministerial qualifications, and (b) the ceremony of laying-on of hands as a public proclamation of the examination's having been sustained. Since the Ruling Elders and the Teaching Elders are alike and equally members of Presbytery, both have the right of participation in both phases of ordination. Any other view of ordination tends to make it a magical rite and to give to the Ministry a distinction which Scriptures do not accord to the office.

The issue was of importance, Thornwell believed, because the denial of the Ruling Elder's right in ordination broke a distinctive principle of Presbyterianism. In civil representative government, he explained, there are bi-cameral houses of legislation; in Presbyterian government, the same function of representing all classes of the governed people is effected by the two classes of Elders. To bar the one class from any function of a court, was to bar this principle of Presbyterian government and to provide thereby for more flagrant abuses of clericalism.⁴¹

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See Collected Writings, iv, 115-131; 43-114; 134-142.

41

Ibid., iv, 48, 62-65, 70-71, 80, 94-95.

Although Thornwell and Breckinridge's principles were defeated in both the General Assemblies of 1843 and of 1844, both the northern and southern Assemblies have since reversed these decisions. As the church law now stands, in all functions of church judicatories, Ruling Elders and Ministers are on a perfect parity in duties, powers and responsibilities.

(5) The Ministry. Although Thornwell insisted that, under the Presbyterian system of church government, the Ministry and the Eldership are on a parity of duties and powers in the church courts, he also recognized that the Ministry has peculiar duties and powers which makes it a distinct office. Under the Roman Catholic system, he thought the Ministry was a separate class in the Church; under the congregationalist form of organization, the Ministry acts as the proxy of the people; under the Presbyterian form, the Ministry is a group of representatives of the people called by God. The peculiar function of the Minister is his teaching by means of preaching and administration of the sacraments. His pastoral duties he shares with the Eldership. 42

The call of a man to the office of the Ministry as well as a call from one field of labor to another, Thornwell considered as providentially ordered by God. No man should be urged to become a Minister. The Church should pray the Lord of the harvest for laborers and then examine those who present themselves as candidates for positive proofs of their having been Divinely called. Ordination, he wrote, is but "a formal recognition and

and publication of the fact, that God, in the judgment of the Church, expressed by one of its courts, has called the ordained man to the office" of the Ministry.⁴³ In this connection he mentioned the case of a President of Yale College, Dr. Woolsey, who was ordained that he might become a college president. This was not necessary for the duties of his office and thus there was some question whether the ordination was valid.⁴⁴ On another occasion Thornwell wrote a friend who was considering declining a call extended to him for his Ministerial services: "The case to me is very plain, and I shall really tremble for you, if you decline. Your mouth must be shut against any prayer hereafter for a field of ministerial labour. God may say, 'I called and ye refused.'⁴⁵"

On the basis of the Divine character of the call to the Ministry, Thornwell drew these conclusions: (a) None but those called of God should be in the Ministry. (b) To reject the Minister's message is to reject the Savior he is commissioned to proclaim. (c) The immediate end of preaching is the salvation of souls. (d) The preacher must speak forth all of Bible truth. (e) Earnestness is a necessary feature of successful preaching. (f) The Minister must have experienced deeply in his own heart

⁴³ Ibid., iv, 35-37, 94-95.

⁴⁴ Ibid., iv, 26.

⁴⁵ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 423.

those solemn truths which he preaches to others. (g) The glory of God must be an object dear to the Minister's heart. (h) The work of the Ministry must occupy the Minister's undivided attention.⁴⁶

Thornwell also emphasized the Minister's training in the Scriptures for the message he was to preach and in general education that he might understand the age in which he was to minister.⁴⁷ To this end the Minister must be possessed of a sound mind. Eccentricities of mind should be scrupulously kept out of the Ministry. A Minister should be an educated man. This should procure for him an enlargement of the mind, the formation of habits and the acquisition of knowledge all of which would be beneficial to his ministry. His further training should be along professional lines to include Sacred Criticism, History and Theology. Thornwell was one of those Presbyterians who insisted, even in a day when the demand for Ministers in a frontier country was great, upon the education of the Ministry. His reasons were that Christ trained His disciples, and that the science of theology is one of interpretation which, by its very nature, involves the necessity of training.⁴⁸

Preaching on ethical issues which involve debatable social and political issues, Thornwell strictly forbade. He himself found

⁴⁶ Collected Writings, iv, 566-575.

⁴⁷ Ibid., iv, 558.

⁴⁸ Ibid., iv, 559-561.

it impossible to be absolutely consistent at this point. In 1850, preaching on the occasion of Calhoun's death, he claimed for the pulpit the duty "to proclaim to our rulers that God will bring them into judgment for their public and official conduct, . . . it is the office of the preacher to tell them, that if they say or do aught contrary to the principles of eternal rectitude, they say or do it at the peril of their souls."⁴⁹ On November 21, 1860, in preaching to a prominent congregation in the capital of South Carolina during days of intense political feelings, he said, "I have never introduced secular politics into the instructions of the pulpit." This policy, he affirmed, he had adopted on principle. Nevertheless, he continued, there are times when a preacher must treat certain issues not on the basis of scripture but on the basis of the facts of history and experience. And, if what he says is true, "the duties which he enjoins must be accepted as Divine commands."⁵⁰ In the body of this sermon, Thornwell discussed both secession and slavery at length and concluded that the Union was virtually dissolved, that the South needed to pray for leaders "to construct a Government" and to pray "that our courage may be equal to every emergency," for "our path to victory may be through a baptism of blood."⁵¹

49

J. H. Thornwell, Thoughts Suited to the Present Crisis, p. 32.

50

Collected Writings, iv, 511-512.

51

Ibid., iv, 547.

(6) The Board Question. As early as 1802, the General Assembly found itself unable, within the brief duration of its collective deliberations, to care for all the details of its promotional work in missions, education and publication. At that time standing committees were appointed to care for these details. In 1816, upon recommendation of the members of these committees, the organizations were made by General Assembly into executive Boards with responsibilities for these activities of the Church and with power to act with reference to these duties.⁵² During the Old School - New School schism of 1837, it became apparent that the Church was divided in its opinion as to the safest and best scriptural mode of promoting the Church's interests at home and abroad. Some thought it was that of the Assembly's Boards and others thought the work might be done better by voluntary organizations entirely separate from the Church's control.⁵³

During the controversy, through its official publication, The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, Princeton seminary sided uniformly with the friends of the Assembly's Boards.⁵⁴ Breckin-

⁵² Appendix, Collected Writings, iv, 589.

⁵³ Robert Baird, Religion in the United States of America, 1844, p. 556. One Presbyterian historian interpreted the latter sentiment as the repugnance of the South to centralization of authority. R. E. Thompson, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1907, p. 122. If Thornwell's position is at all representative, it would seem that this position is ill taken.

⁵⁴ Index Volume, 1825-1868, The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 1871, pp. 8-9.

ridge and Thornwell joined in the attack upon the Board system, although they favored even less church extension through voluntary societies. In 1839 Breckinridge wrote that the Boards "are unnecessary, unscriptural and un-Presbyterian, . . ." ⁵⁵

In 1841 Thornwell wrote an article on Boards for Breckinridge's Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine. In the accompanying letter he said, "I believe that the Boards will eventually prove our masters, unless they are crushed in their infancy." ⁵⁶ In 1841 he discovered those in Glasgow, Scotland, who supported him in his attack on the Board question. They "urge me," he wrote his wife, "to cry aloud and spare not." ⁵⁷ In 1842 he made an unsuccessful attempt to get the question presented before the General Assembly. That same year, however, he wrote a personal letter objecting to the system to William Henry Foote of Petersburg, Virginia, who evidently was an agent of the Board of Missions and had written Thornwell to ask for his support. ⁵⁹ In a letter to his wife from the General Assembly of 1848, Thornwell wrote,

⁵⁵ The Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine, vol. v, no. 8 (August 1839), p. 378. See also vol. vi, no. 10 (October 1840), p. 450 and vol. vii, no. 2 (February 1841), p. 96.

⁵⁶ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 224.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 175.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 229.

⁵⁹ Letter: J. H. Thornwell to W. H. Foote, February 11, 1842. Mss. collection, Union Theological Seminary library, Richmond, Va.

"My doctrine about Boards . . is rapidly growing and in a few more years (it) will be the predominant type of opinion in the Presbyterian Church."
60

He did not realize the permanency of the Board organization. The question remained unsolved until the division of 1861. The southern Presbyterian church, on the suggestion of Thornwell, instituted executive committees in place of the Boards, bodies which were to be directly responsible to the Assembly for their actions but without power of initiating action on the floor of General Assembly. The question remains today as one of the few marks of distinction between the organizational forms of the northern and southern Presbyterian bodies.

One of the principles of Thornwell's polity was that the Church as such must perform for herself all her duties and cannot delegate the obligations to some agent. Feeling that the Boards were semi-independent agencies, nothing more than secular corporations, he concluded that they have usurped the place of the Presbyteries. He attacked the Boards, therefore, as unscriptural, as unPresbyterian, and as tending to dissolve the parity of the Ministry by placing the Board Secretary over the rest of the Ministry. As a substitute organization, he suggested a standing committee of the Assembly to propose action for Church promotion to the Presbyteries and to coordinate the activities of the several Presbyteries. The financial support of these activities should be handled through that board of deacons which every church court should have con-

nected with it for just that purpose.

The reactions Charles Hodge had to Thornwell's proposals are typical of the type of response they received in the Church at large. (a) The distinction between the Boards and Thornwell's proposed committees is a mere difference of words. (b) Our Church has never held these High Church doctrines about organization. (c) There is a necessity for some organization. Since the Holy Spirit guides the Church, it can be left to some digression in organizational matters without sacrificing its Divine nature. (d) Thornwell's spirituality emphasis is an utter impracticality, inconsistent with the practise of the Church and utterly unscriptural. (e) The Church, deprived of discretionary power, is tied hand and foot. The spirituality doctrine of the Church in practise is suicidal. (f) In establishing and maintaining Boards, there is involved no exercise of power beyond what the Church is authorized to put forth.

62

(7) Criticism of the Roman Catholic Church. "The proton pseudos of your system," Thornwell wrote his Catholic correspondent,⁶³ is the doctrine of "the infallibility of the Papal Church." The Primitive Church plainly received infallible knowledge of Divine truth only through the Scriptures. The doctrine of infallibility tends to accumulate power in the hands of the priest-

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Collected Writings, iv, 116, 155-160, 186, 193. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 221.

62

Ibid., iv, 226-230, 237.

63

Ibid., iii, 475, 488.

hood, thus making them a privileged class and the people less significant than the Scriptures and Presbyterianism hold them to be.⁶⁴ Allied with this fault is that of giving to the ceremony of ordination a magical character rather than viewing it as a regular act of a constituted court of the Church of God.⁶⁵ The practical application of these tendencies is shown in the way the Church's stamp of approval has been placed upon doubtful miracles.⁶⁶ With reference to the priesthood, Thornwell concluded:

Sir, if all history be not a fable, the priesthood of Rome, taken as a body, can yield in corruption, ambition, tyranny and licentiousness to no class of men that every cursed the earth. If infallible honesty can be proved of . . . this cage of unclean birds, . . . then all moral reasoning falls . . . and we may quietly . . . yield to the caprices of fancy. Sir, . . . your dilapidated Church is a dreary spectacle of moral desolation, peopled only by the wild beasts of the desert, full of doleful creatures, owls, satyrs and dragons.⁶⁷

The Roman Church in her approbation of celibacy, Thornwell believed, confuses chastity with virginity. "But," he insisted, "chastity is not virginity; the wife is as pure as the virgin, the husband as chaste as the eunuch. We dare not, therefore, pledge ourselves to perpetual continence when it may be that God designs to protect our purity by the holy estate of wedlock."⁶⁸

The images, altars, incense and elaborate ritual with which the Catholic Church conducts her worship are but symbolic of its spirit of ancient Paganism. Paganism too was dependent upon rit-

⁶⁴ Ibid., iv, 64.

⁶⁵ Ibid., iv, 96.

⁶⁶ Ibid., iii, 246.

⁶⁷ Ibid., iii, 438.

⁶⁸ Ibid., ii, 575.

ual-magic before a hierarchy of gods for the performance of
⁶⁹
 external miracles.

The Catholic Church's claims to Apostolic succession Thornwell considered simply pretensions. The Apostles were men who (a) had seen Christ, (b) had been among the founders of the Christian Church, and (c) were possessed of miraculous powers as evidence of their Apostleship. Contrary to the teachings of Rome, (a) no one now on earth has ever seen Christ, (b) no one is invested with miraculous powers of the Apostolic sort, and (c) there is a perfectly plausible explanation for a hierarchy in the ministry. In contrast to the claims of Papal Apostolic succession, the representative form of government by Presbyteries is so contrary to human expectations as to indicate its validity. "Diocesan Episcopacy, with all its abominations, was established upon the ruins
⁷⁰
 of parochial Presbytery."

In the Lord's Supper, Thornwell maintained, the Roman priests, with more thought for their own position than for the truth, determined to withhold the cup from the laity, "though this measure of high-handed tyranny was in open defiance of law, precedent and
⁷¹
 truth." He considered the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation an absurdity, a contradiction and a fact which is repugnant to every principle of human belief. Rome, in proposing this dogma

⁶⁹
Ibid., i, 606; iii, 518-523, 530-539.

⁷⁰
Ibid., iv, 124, 562.

⁷¹
Ibid., iv, 129.

is the patron of skepticism. She is guilty of the stupendous folly of requiring us to believe, and at the same time deny, the certainty of sense as a means of information. By introducing and encouraging skepticism, Romanism disturbs the foundations of society. It sanctions principles which, if legitimately carried out, would obliterate all science, morality, regulated freedom and religion.⁷² Thornwell concluded, in a patriotic strain, that in holding its authority higher than that of the State, the Roman Church has a tendency to merge the State into her own organization and make it a subordinate part. As the doctrines of Rome gain ascendancy among any people, in the same proportion a secret enemy is cherished which plots the destruction of all institutions which may happen to contradict the humor of a bigoted Italian prince. When once Roman Catholics become masters of the State, "they are to strike for Rome, sell the liberties of the country to their spiritual lord, raise the banner of inhuman persecution, and purge the land from the damning stain of heretical pravity with the blood of its noblest sons."⁷³

III. Thornwell and the Southern Presbyterian Church

(1) The Churches and the War. It is impossible to understand the founding of the southern Presbyterian church without some con-

⁷² Ibid., iii, 501-504.

⁷³ Ibid., iii, 550.

ception of the religious character which the churches, North and South, attributed to the Civil War. One Northern religious magazine about 1862 made the comment that, "There has probably been more prayer offered for this country, within the last twelve months, than in all the years before since the war of the Revolution."⁷⁴

The northern Old School Presbyterian Church in 1862 adopted a paper prepared by Robert J. Breckinridge which was mildly typical of the declarations made by official church bodies throughout the period of the war in the North. This document stated that public order had been wickedly superseded by rebellion in the Southern portion of the Union; that this rebellion was utterly contrary to the dictates of morality, and plainly condemned by the revealed will of God; that it was the solemn duty of the National Government to preserve at whatever cost the national union and constitution; and that it was the bounden duty of the people who composed this great nation to uphold the Federal Government.⁷⁵

Early in the war, an "Address to Christians Throughout the World", signed by one hundred of the prominent ministers of various denominations in the South, was widely distributed. It stated that after a conflict of opinions between the North and the South, in Church and State, of more than thirty years, the South withdrew to secure peace. The North had sent troops to

compel reunion to a government whose character, in the judgment of the South, had been sacrificed to sectionalism. "They of the Northern church say that they 'glory in this war.' We of the South glory in no such thing. Forced to defend ourselves, we shall certainly meet our enemies without an iota of fear; . . . While the Northern Christians are so piously trusting in superior numbers, we arm, and fast, and pray, and our cry is, O, Lord of Hosts, we trust in thee!"⁷⁶

An English observer of the second battle of Bull Run recorded that the ground was "covered with leaves of tracts and bibles."⁷⁷ The horrors of the war must have been due, in part at least, to the successful efforts of the churches in the respective sections to make clear to the combatants and to others the religious nature of the crusade upon which they had embarked.

(2) Ecclesiastical Sectionalism. It is not apparent from their attitudes toward the war that there was a difference between the North and the South concerning the social function of the Church. Such, however, was the case. The more liberal of

taken in the North concerning the War and slavery.

⁷⁵ Minutes of the (O. S.) General Assembly, 1862, pp. 624-626.

⁷⁶ Quoted by W. W. Bennett, The Great Revival in the Southern Armies, 1877, pp. 89-91.

⁷⁷ Edward Dicey, Six Months in the Federal States, (London, 1863), ii, 27. Cited by A. C. Cole, The Irrepressible Conflict, 1850-1865, p. 394n.

the northern churches and, to a degree, all of them, shared a viewpoint expressed by Theodore Parker, that, "A Christian Church should be the means of reforming the world, a forming it after the pattern of Christian ideas."⁷⁸ The South generally advocated the theory of the Church's social function which Thornwell so vigorously presented. The editor of the Southern Presbyterian, a religious newspaper published in Columbia, South Carolina, asked, in 1861, "Is the Presbyterian pulpit at the North to hound the dogs of war upon the South, acting in self-defense, . . . ?"⁷⁹

The southern church found it increasingly difficult to be consistent with its theory of the spiritual character of the Church. On November 21, 1860, Thornwell declared in one breath, "I have never introduced secular politics into the instructions of the pulpit," and in another, referring to the secession movement, "There are cases . . . in which the question of duty is simply a question of revolution."⁸⁰

(3) Early Signs of Tension. The founding of the southern Presbyterian church as a separate Assembly must be considered as more than sheer reaction to the political loyalties expressed by the Presbyterian Church's General Assembly. In 1837 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia rendered "without authority and

⁷⁸ J. S. Commager, Theodore Parker, p. 166.

⁷⁹ The Southern Presbyterian, (Columbia, S. C.), February 9, 1861, p. 4.

⁸⁰ Collected Writings, iv, 511, 512.

void" an anti-slavery action of the General Assembly of 1818.⁸¹

In the following year a resolution was defeated to make the Synod⁸² independent of the Assembly because of its anti-slavery agitation.

From these early days to 1861, "a great influence in opposing Southern separation proceeded from the (Columbia) Seminary in the person and work of Dr. J. H. Thornwell."⁸³ Three weeks before South Carolina proclaimed her political independence, December 1860, the Synod met and, while disavowing its intention to give political advice, proceeded to "express the belief that the people of South Carolina and now solemnly called on to imitate their revolutionary forefathers and stand up for their rights." "This," as Professor Mills wrote, "could mean nothing else than⁸⁴ secession . . . "

In March 1861, the Southern Presbyterian carried the statement, "we do wish our brethren North could believe in secession and the Southern Confederacy as accomplished facts."⁸⁵ In May 1861, the editor of that newspaper commented prophetically, "It can never more be possible for (southern Presbyterians) to be ecclesiastically one with the Northern part of the Church. There is a strong probability that the General Assembly, during its present sessions, will take such action, or at least disclose among a portion of its members such a spirit, as will settle the⁸⁶ matter forever."

Before the meeting of the General Assembly in May 1861, all the Presbyteries in the Synod of South Carolina advised their commissioners not to go, withheld funds which normally would have gone to the Assembly's benevolent causes and invoked the blessing of God upon the councils and arms of the Southern Confederacy.⁸⁷ B. M. Palmer stated that the few commissioners from other parts of the South went "determined that, in the severing of churchly ties, the aggression should come from that same quarter which had wrought the rupture of the State."⁸⁸ Neither Thornwell, Palmer, nor any other major southern Presbyterian leader was present.

The desires of the South for some Assembly action which might be construed as so political in nature as to afford the excuse for separation of defending the spiritual character of the Church were amply satisfied with the patriotic resolutions offered by the venerable Dr. Gardiner Spring of New York. These resolutions were adopted by the Assembly by a vote of one hundred and fifty-four to sixty-six.⁸⁹ The southern Presbyterian church adopted

⁸² Quoted in ibid., p. 32.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁴ D. Jones and W. H. Mills, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina Since 1850, pp. 49, 77.

⁸⁵ Reprinted from the Southern Presbyterian in The Daily Southern Guardian (Columbia, S. C.), March 5, 1861, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Quoted by The Daily Southern Guardian, May 28, 1861, p. 1.

⁸⁷ Jones and Mills, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

the interpretation of the "Spring Resolutions" which had been anticipated. Palmer expressed it in these words, " . . . even if not ejected by what was equivalent to an act of expulsion, the Southern Presbyteries were compelled to separate themselves, in order to preserve the crown rights of the Redeemer, and the spiritual independence of His kingdom, the Church."⁹⁰

(4) Separate Establishment. Realizing that the South had become a separate nation and that its government was at war with the Federal Government, forty-seven Presbyteries comprising seven hundred ministers and twelve hundred churches withdrew from the northern Presbyterian church and on December 4, 1861, organized the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America.⁹¹

Thornwell's followers formed an active minority among the commissioners to the constituting Assembly. All four of the highest officials, Moderator, Stated Clerk, Permanent Clerk and Temporary Clerk,⁹² were his disciples. He himself would have been named

⁸⁸ B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 501.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 501.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 502. Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from Various Presbyteries in the Confederate States of America held in the First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia, on the 15th, 16th and 17th of August, 1861, (Atlanta, Ga.: Franklin Printing House, 1861), p. 13.

⁹¹ Collected Writings, iv, 453. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, 1861, (Augusta, Ga.: Chronicle and Sentinel, 1861). William C. Robinson, op. cit., p. 49. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Social Sources of Denominationalism, pp. 197-198. L. M. Rudge, art. in Religions and Philosophies in the United States of America, p. 19.

⁹² Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, 1861, p. 2.

Moderator had his illness not prevented. B. M. Palmer, his devoted friend, was elected to this coveted position. Thornwell introduced the first two resolutions in the Assembly, giving the church its name and defining its character. He limited its constitution to that of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, only substituting the words "Confederate States" for "United States."⁹³

He was a member of the committee on Bills and Overtures and chairman of the committee on Foreign Missions. His name appears twenty-six times in the minutes of the Assembly's five day meeting, making it by far the most prominent name in the record.⁹⁴ "Indeed," as W. M. McPheeters wrote in 1901, "It is but history to add that to him probably more than to any other single individual, our Church owes most of what is distinctive in her principles and her polity."⁹⁵

(5) Principles Proclaimed. Perhaps Thornwell's most valuable service to this denomination was his framing of the "Address to the Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the Earth", adopted by the first General Assembly as its justification for separate existence. The document was signed in an impressive ceremony by fifty ministers and thirty-three Ruling Elders who were commissioners to that body.⁹⁶ It has been termed the denomination's "Magna Carta."⁹⁷

⁹³ Ibid., p. 71.

⁹⁴ Ibid., by private count.

⁹⁵ W. H. McPheeters, Columbia Seminary, a Retrospect Involving a Responsibility, p. 12. William C. Robinson, op. cit., p. 53.

In this writing, Thornwell declared that the southern church desired no schism, only separation along national lines for the efficiency of operation and the advancement of the interests of the Church. Continuation of Church union in the face of national separation might lead to a situation where political questions would be introduced into the church-courts, and would be discussed with bitterness and rancour. He did not consider the adoption of the "Spring Resolutions" a sufficient ground for separation, although it indicated how impossible it would be to maintain the spirituality of the Church with the divided character of the Union. Referring to this action of the Old School Assembly, however, he wrote that this was "the first thing which roused our Presbyteries to look the question of separation in the face."⁹⁸

Providence has determined the separation of the two nations. The tradition of the Presbyterian church is to allow assembly lines to follow national boundaries. The influence of both North and South in their respective views of slavery would be enhanced by separation. The policy of the southern church which Thornwell enunciated was that, as a Church, it was neither slavery's friend

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Collected Writings, iv, 446-447. B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 504. T. C. Johnson, History of the Presbyterian Church, South, in the United States, p. 347.

97

W. H. McNeesters, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

98

Collected Writings, iv, 451, 447.

nor its foe. According to the Bible, slavery was no sin. The Church's relation to it, therefore, was not to pronounce against it but to enforce with spiritual sanctions the ethical and religious duties implied in the master-slave relation. The peculiar aim of the southern Church was to try to bring out all of the energies of the Presbyterian system of church government. Thus, as Thornwell had expressed in an earlier meeting of his Synod, he hoped the southern church would replace Boards with committees would conduct missionary enterprises wholly through the Presbyteries and would limit its activities in education to assisting indigent ministerial candidates. He hoped the southern Church would take no part as a denomination either in primary education or in higher education.

Another ardent Presbyterian, President John Witherspoon of the Log College (now Princeton University), wrote during the period of the American Revolution concerning the duties of the colonists: Separation is not being sought by the colonies but is forced upon us by the blunders of the British government. Under the circumstances, separation is inevitable. Thereby it is the visible intention of Providence that the colonies should declare and establish their independence. It is interesting to note that Thornwell's reasoning in his address to the churches follows

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Ibid., iv, 442-444, 453-456.

100

V. L. Collins, President Witherspoon, ii, 187-188.

almost exactly the same line of argument.

Of this address, one southern Presbyterian historian wrote, "Such a document should be read by every student who would know the origin¹⁰¹ of the Presbyterian Church, South." Another, one of Thornwell's seminary faculty colleagues and one of the editors of his Collected Writings, twenty years after his death, claimed, Thornwell is "far from being forgotten amongst us. . . . What Thornwell held, what Thornwell said, is always felt (in our church courts) to be a most potent argument for or against any debatable position. As long as our Church lives, J. H. Thornwell will live in our hearts and his name (will) dwell on our lips. And in this conviction, simply his name was the only epitaph we inscribed¹⁰² on his tombstone."

101

T. C. Johnson, op. cit., p. 347.

102

J. B. Adger, "Memorial of J. H. Thornwell, D. D., LL. D.," Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C., 1884, pp. 188-189.

Chapter VII

The Social and Educational Relations of Church and State

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Chapter VII

I. Church and State

The Church and the State, as visible institutions, are entirely distinct, Thornwell wrote, and neither can usurp the province of the other without injury to both. Their provinces must be entirely distinct: they differ in origin, nature, ends, prerogatives, powers and in sanctions.¹

The State is founded in the constitution of man as moral and social, and is designed to realize the idea of justice. The Church is founded in the facts of redemption, and is designed to realize the idea of grace. The State aims at social order; the Church, at the holiness of individuals. The badge of the State's authority is the sword. The badge of the Church's authority is the keys, by which it opens and shuts the kingdom of heaven, according as men are believing or impenitent. The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual; that of the State includes the

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Collected Writings, iv, 449, 554.

exercise of force. The Constitution of the Church is a Divine Revelation; the Constitution of the State must be determined by human reason and by the course of providential events. The Church has no right to construct or modify a government for the State, and the State has no right to frame a creed or polity for the Church.²

Church and State, therefore, are as planets moving in different spheres. Unless each is confined to its own track, the consequences may be disastrous. They fulfil their respective purposes best when each is restrained within its own appropriate jurisdiction. Caesar and God must be kept distinct. When Church and State interfere with each other, "they menace the earth with anarchy, confusion and blood. They can never coalesce; and all arbitrary unions, like the converse of the sons of God with the daughters of men, are productive only of giants famous for rebellion and full of cruelty."³

The Church transcends its sphere when it pronounces upon political questions. The State transcends its sphere when it deals with ecclesiastical matters. It is the Church's duty to announce general principles of the moral law but their concrete applications do not fall within the limits of her power. Yet, when the State makes laws contradicting the eternal principles of rectitude, the Church must testify against them and must humbly petition

²Ibid., iv, 449-450.

³Ibid., iii, 541, 557.

that they be repealed. Similarly, if the Church should become a disturber of the peace, the State must intervene. Ordinarily, however, there should be no necessity for either Church or State to abandon their specific and limited operational spheres.⁴

Christianity is most powerful, Thornwell held, when it stands alone. Alliance with the State corrupts and weakens its spiritual authority. It makes the Church a secular institution. The truth is, he stated, the only principle which can secure the liberty of conscience without engendering intolerance is the absolute separation of Church and State. The State, when it assumes the propagation of religion as one of its distinctive ends, lays the foundation of bigotry and despotism. And no Church on earth has a right to commend its doctrines or enforce its discipline by civil penalties or disabilities. To keep the State within the bounds of its appropriate jurisdiction is the secret of religious liberty. And to keep the Church within the bounds of its appropriate jurisdiction is the secret of political freedom.⁵

Thornwell criticized the United States Constitution for not containing an explicit recognition of the basic place of Christianity in the foundation of this country's institutions.⁶ The details of this criticism have been previously examined. This point of view was presented by President Jasper Adams of the College of Charleston to a convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Charleston, February 13, 1833, when he spoke on "The Relation of

⁴Ibid., iv, 440, 450.

⁵Ibid., 11, 44-45; 111, 541, 557; iv, 554-555.

⁶Ibid., iv, 550.

Christianity to Civil Government in the United States."⁷

II. Negro Slavery

Twelve years after the first English colony was founded on the American continent at Jamestown, as John Rolfe recorded, "About the last of August (1619) came in a Dutch man of warre that sold us twenty negars."⁸ From that time to January 1, 1863, when the "Emancipation Proclamation" was announced by President Lincoln, the question of negro slavery was a moot social issue in American life and thought. It was an issue in which the application of the theory of the absolute separation of Church and State was involved. It is from this angle of the problem that it is treated here.

In the struggle to vindicate this peculiar institution of the South, Thornwell had his part. The editors of his Collected Writings, who were his younger contemporaries, stated that "on this subject" Thornwell "may be fairly considered as having been a representative of Southern thought and sentiment."⁹

Thornwell's father was a plantation manager. In his estate there was mentioned one slave.¹⁰ Thornwell married a plantation owner's daughter through which relation he inherited a small plan-

⁷Jasper Adams, The Relation of Christianity to the Civil Government of the United States, Charleston, 1833.

⁸Edward Arber, ed., Travels and Works of Captain John Smith, edition of 1910, p. 55.

⁹J. B. Adger and J. L. Girardeau, eds., Collected Writings, iv, 380.

¹⁰B. W. Palmer, The Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell, D. D., LL. D., p. 14.

tation and some slaves.¹¹ He often expressed concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of his household servants.¹² In 1847 Francis Lieber considered Thornwell to be sufficiently open-minded on the subject of slavery to receive intelligently presented material on the abolition side of the question.¹³ In 1861, while in Europe, Thornwell determined, in the cause of peace, to move immediately for gradual emancipation. Returning, however, he discovered that it was too late; "the die," he said "was cast."¹⁴

(1) The Negro. Thornwell rejected the theories of those who attempted to degrade the Negro beyond the limits of humanity. It is a false science which links the Negro with the brute. The Negro is of one blood with ourselves. He has sinned as we have, and has an equal interest with us in redemption. The instinctive impulses of our nature and the declarations of the Bible lead us to recognize in his moral, religious and intellectual nature the same humanity, the image of God. "We are not ashamed to call him our brother."¹⁵ Yet in 1861, Thornwell wrote that without slavery he was profoundly persuaded the African race could never be elevated in the scale of being. "As long as that race, in its comparative degradation, co-exists side by side with the white, bondage is its normal condition."¹⁶

¹¹Ibid., pp. 342-343.

¹²Ibid., pp. 428, 444, 451, 461.

¹³T. S. Perry, Life and Letters of Francis Lieber, p. 211.

¹⁴B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 482-483.

¹⁵Collected Writings, iv, 403. Written in 1850.

¹⁶Ibid., iv, 460. Written in 1861.

Viewing the Negro as a person, Thornwell was opposed to renewal of the slave trade. His reasons were: (a) renewal of the trade would alter the patriarchal character of slavery as it then existed; (b) an influx of barbarian Negroes would jeopardize law and order in the South; (c) to increase the available slaves by renewal of the trade would decrease the value of each; and (d) the trade inevitably would bring on wars and seditions in Africa and would lead white men to be tempted into kidnapping. "I have expressed my opinions freely to the Governor himself (Governor Adams who favored renewal of the slave trade), whom I highly esteem. The sentiments of the State will revolt at the thing; it cannot go."¹⁷

(2) Slavery as a Social Institution. Thornwell thought of slavery primarily as a form of labor organization.¹⁸ This aspect of his thought is treated more fully elsewhere in this study. He denied the charge that the slave system involved sale of persons. The rights to the labor of enslaved persons is what is legally transferred. Slavery is a social and political institution, in which relations subsist between moral, intelligent and responsible beings, involving reciprocal rights and reciprocal obligations. The master's right is to the slave's labor; the slave's duty is the service which, in conformity with this right, the master exacts. The essential difference between free labor and slave labor is the

¹⁷B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 422-423.

¹⁸Collected Writings, iv, 393, 539.

presence or absence of a contract.¹⁹

The South, Thornwell insisted, always was willing to look at its institution of slavery in its civil and political relations. But when churchmen claimed, upon Biblical grounds, through official church courts, what was not their jurisdiction to treat, that slavery was immoral and sinful, the South objected. They should leave slavery where God left it. Slavery is a part of the curse which sin has introduced into the world. It stands in the same general relation to Christianity as poverty, sickness, disease or death. It does not spring from the nature of man, nor from the nature of society, but from the nature of man as sinful, and the nature of society as disordered.²⁰

(3) The Abolition Movement. As early as 1847, Thornwell had conceived of slavery as a natural evil, changes in which would have to be made not by the Church, but by the State.²¹ By 1850, he had begun to think that Abolitionists overlooked all other evils to weep for the Southern slave, cultivated insurrections in the South, and viewed the utter ruin of the Republic as a trophy for human progress.²² In 1851, he wrote that Abolitionism is the embodiment of the "very spirit of Rationalism" because it denies the authority of the Scriptures by making the Bible's teaching subsidiary to its own tenets.²³ In the same writing, he announced

¹⁹Ibid., iv, 411, 413-414.

²⁰Ibid., iv, 387, 419-420.

²¹Ibid., iv, 501.

²²Ibid., iv, 400-401.

²³Ibid., iv, 393-394.

that no argument could be used against slavery which could not also be used against every other institution of civilized life. If they succeed, he prophesied, the Abolitionists will discover "that they have set an engine in motion which cannot be arrested, until it has crushed and ground to powder the safeguards of life and property among themselves."²⁴ His chief objection to Abolitionists such as Channing, whom he felt sane enough to be dealt with, was that they represent "the perfection of the individual as the ultimate end of his existence, while the Scriptures represent it as a means to a higher and nobler end, the glory of God."²⁵

As a political question, Thornwell considered abolition but one form of those European social experiments the ultimate results of which would be the reduction of all social distinctions.²⁶ Changes in this world's institutions, he said, must be left to the judgments of men as citizens of the State. "Slavery, as a political question, is one in regard to which communities and States may honestly differ."²⁷

Thornwell treated at greater length the religious arguments of the Abolitionists. Opposition to slavery has never been the offspring of the Bible. Once it is admitted that slavery is not a sin, the Bible is plain; deny that and the Bible seems made up

²⁴Ibid., iv, 394.

²⁵Ibid., iv, 425.

²⁶Ibid., iv, 406.

²⁷Ibid., iv, 388.

of riddles. There can be little doubt that, if the Church had repressed speculation, and had been content to stand by the testimony of God, many dissertations against slavery would never have been written.²⁸

According to Thornwell, the Bible does not condemn slavery as an evil. It teaches that it is not much more harm to be a master than a father, a slave than a child. It as distinctly sanctions slavery as any other social condition of man. From its account, slavery, as an institution, has existed from the very beginnings of social life. From Abraham on, it prevailed no less in the Church than in the ungodly world outside. It is constantly alluded to in the Scriptures and is spoken of without the slightest mark of divine disapprobation.²⁹

Thornwell made three remarks concerning Abolitionist Biblical arguments: (a) The arguments rest upon principles concerned with debatable questions such as human rights rather than upon the obvious teachings of the Scriptures. (b) When the argument is supposed to be taken from the Bible, the exegesis employed consists largely of strained applications of passages, or forced inferences from doctrines, in open violation of the law that Scripture is its own interpreter. (c) Duties such as those of masters and slaves which the Bible enjoins are forced into a system of morals whose fundamental principles exclude them.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., iv, 385, 392-393.

²⁹J. H. Thornwell, "The Baptism of Servants," Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. i, no. 1 (June, 1847), pp. 63-64.

³⁰Collected Writings, iv, 388.

There is much ethical truth, Thornwell admitted, which it is not the province of divine revelation to teach. But such truth must be consistent with revelation. One of the Abolitionist principles is that every man is entitled to the fruit of his own labor. But, Thornwell charged, this is not a principle which is to be found in Scripture. Another argument rests upon the hypothesis of the absolute equality of the species. But, he objected, the Scriptures do not teach that an essential equality as men implies a corresponding equality of state. A third argument is based upon the indestructible personality of men by which thesis, he contended, it is apparent the essential nature of slavery is misunderstood.³¹

If it could be shown, he conceded, that slavery, as an institution, contradicts the spirit of the Gospel, that it is essentially unfavorable to the cultivation and growth of the religious nature of the slaves, or that it retards the progress of society by contradicting the basic supremacy of justice, "then it is self-condemned; religion and philanthropy alike require us to labour for its destruction, and every good man amongst us would feel bound to contribute to its removal; and even the voice of patriotism would demand that we should wipe from our country the foul reproach of standing in the way of the destined improvement of mankind."³² But, he held, these propositions could not be proved.

(4) A Religious Apology for Slavery. The constructive

³¹Ibid., iv, 389-390.

³²Ibid., iv, 408.

argument which the editors of Thornwell's writings termed, "The Christian Doctrine of Slavery," is included in a simple syllogism. Thornwell viewed the institution as one of the devices by which God providentially was effecting the moral education of persons. Man's highest end is to glorify God. Under the system of Southern slavery, slaves can glorify God as well as exercise their moral and intellectual natures to the extent of their capacities. Therefore, the Southern system of slavery, as Thornwell conceived it, must be neither inhuman nor contrary to God's will.³³ There is a bondage, sin. True slavery is the scheme in which a man scorns to call master any being, God included. True freedom is not multiplication of civil and social privileges, or of advantages of rank and fortune, but emancipation from the domination of sin, from the deceits of prejudice and error, and "the release of the affections from the attractions of earth."³⁴ The one thing demanded of all men is to learn the lesson of obedience to God. "The lesson is the same, however different the text-books from which it has been taught."³⁵

What Thornwell considered necessary in any social arrangement was justice. He strongly emphasized the necessity of providing the Negroes with religious instruction. He exercised his influence in the church courts to stress this point. The religious teachers

³³Ibid., iv, 425-430.

³⁴Ibid., iv, 416-418.

³⁵Ibid., iv, 424.

and preachers should be Caucasians. "There is too great a proneness to superstition and extravagance among the most enlightened of them (the Negroes), to admit their being entrusted with the cure of souls."³⁶ But the right to acquire knowledge, along with the rights of family and of personal safety, the State by legislation should protect. If thus the Southern white people provided justice for the slaves, and especially if the slaves were converted, Thornwell had no fears but that Southern slavery would prosper under God and whatever changes in it were necessary would take place without the necessity of violent revolutions.³⁷

III. Education

The question of Church-State relations in American public and private, primary, secondary and higher education was raised in the period of the 1830's by the movement for public schools. That movement was regarded seriously after the great school law of Ohio was adopted in 1838.³⁸ The issue was one of grave concern to the religious educators of that time.

Thornwell was personally active in educational affairs in South Carolina. Immediately after graduation from college, he

³⁶Ibid., iv, 396-397, 428. J. H. Thornwell, "The Black Population," Southern Presbyterian Review, vol, 1, no. 3 (December, 1847), pp. 104-105.

³⁷Collected Writings, iv, 428.

³⁸E. P. Cubberly, Public Education in the United States, p. 125.

became a teacher in one of the private academies.³⁹ At one time he envisaged for himself a career as an academy instructor.⁴⁰ In 1839, he joined with Stephen Elliott, Jr., in a survey of reports of the free schools of the State which had been submitted to the State Legislature and in a group of recommendations to that body concerning public education. These recommendations included: (a) creation of the office of Superintendent of Free Schools for the purpose of discovering the facts concerning the schools; (b) limitation of the students in these schools to the actual needy; (c) establishment of a teachers' training school; and (d) increase of the school appropriation to fifty thousand dollars to cover the cost of the proposed system.⁴¹

From 1838 to 1856, Thornwell was connected officially with South Carolina College either as professor or as president. This connection gave him opportunities to assist in the location of school teachers in South Carolina.⁴² In 1853 he published an open letter to Governor Manning.⁴³ It summarized South Carolina's attitude of assisting public education. It gave the

³⁹B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 120.

⁴¹J. H. Thornwell and Stephen Elliott, Jr., Reports on the Free School System to the General Assembly of South Carolina at the Regular Session of 1839, pp. 3, 4, 5.

⁴²Entry of November 25, 1852. A. G. Simonton Diary. Mss. collection, the Theological Seminary library, Princeton, N. J.

⁴³J. H. Thornwell, Letter to His Excellency Governor Manning on Public Instruction in South Carolina, Columbia, 1853. Republished by the city council of Charleston in 1885 as evidence in the struggle for a system of public schools in South Carolina. Extracts in B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 356-359.

support of Thornwell's influence as president of the State's College to the policy of subordinating the cause of the public schools to the work of state higher education.⁴⁴ "One sun is better," he said, "than a thousand stars."⁴⁵

(1) A Philosophy of Education. The tendency of the untrained mind, Thornwell felt, is passively to receive impressions and suggestions derived from its circumstances or surrounding objects. The remedy against this evil is the habit of thinking clearly, distinctly and coherently.⁴⁶ This habit is acquired only through educational discipline. The purpose of education is to develop and expand the intellectual and moral powers of the student and to bring them to the highest degree of perfection of which they are capable.⁴⁷ The danger of organized education is that it tends to make authority in the form of teaching subservient to truth. "The first duty, therefore, which the love of truth exacts at our hands is to look well to our principles to prove all things and to hold fast that which is good. Bring everything to the standard of evidence which our nature (as minds) supplies."⁴⁸ This is clearly a reflection of his theory of human knowledge which has been previously examined in this study.

⁴⁴Journal of the Convention of the People of South Carolina, 1853. Virginia K. Baker, "James Henley Thornwell, Christian Educator of the Old South," Thesis (A. M.) - Duke University, 1936, p. 43.

⁴⁵J. H. Thornwell, Letter to His Excellency Governor Manning on Public Instruction in South Carolina, p. 27, B. M. Palmer, op. cit.,

⁴⁶Collected Writings, II, 602.

⁴⁷J. H. Thornwell, Mss. address delivered before the literary societies at Davidson College, August 1, 1837, p. 20. C. R. Shaw, Davidson College, p. 37.

⁴⁸Collected Writings, II, 507.

(2) Church and State in Public Education. Thornwell could not avoid the conclusion that religion must be a part of education.⁴⁹ Sabbath-schools he considered as fruitful of much promise for the Church because of their education in Christian principles of those "who are to occupy posts of influence when the fathers have fallen asleep."⁵⁰ From 1840 to the late 1850's, there was a movement in the Presbyterian church to establish parochial schools. Professor L. J. Sherrill, in an excellent study of this movement, indicates that Thornwell was inconsistent in that he supported the movement in 1847 and attacked it in 1856.⁵¹ Thornwell's statement in the General Assembly of 1856 was an application to this problem of his theory of the spiritual nature of the Church, for which theory he was then contending. In the statement of 1847, he only asserted that if the state schools excluded from their curricula the distinctive principles of Christianity, then they should be abandoned and the Church should take charge of education.⁵² His conviction that state education did not necessarily exclude non-sectarian Christianity from its curriculum may have been motivated, as Professor Sherrill and others intimate, by his personal position as an educational officer of the State.

⁴⁹Ibid., iv, 497.

⁵⁰J. H. Thornwell, "Narrative of the State of Religion," Minutes of the O. S. General Assembly, 1847, p. 407.

⁵¹L. J. Sherrill, Presbyterian Parochial Schools, 1846-1870, pp. 28, 32. John M. Wells, Southern Presbyterian Worthies, p. 42.

⁵²Collected Writings, iv, 497-498.

It is equally possible that, because of his experience with the informal type of public school system which then existed in South Carolina, he was unfamiliar with those secularizing influences which his northern Presbyterian brethren observed in the public education experiments in their communities.

(3) Thornwell and South Carolina College. In its own State, South Carolina College held supremacy in higher education almost without challenge until 1850. By 1854, its slightly more than a thousand alumni had supplied two hundred and forty-four lawyers and politicians, eighteen teachers, one hundred and fifty-two physicians and sixty-five ministers.⁵³

From 1838 to 1856, with two brief intervals, Thornwell's life was an integral part of this institution. In 1846, its president, W. C. Preston, expressed to B. M. Palmer his conviction that Thornwell represented to the college the Presbyterians of the State without whose support the college would not exist and that the moral influence Thornwell had over the students was a more effective means of obtaining discipline than many laws.⁵⁴ The fact that Thornwell and Preston were at odds with each other in their aims for the college adds weight to this testimony. Thornwell became Preston's successor in office and as such instituted reforms which the college historian has termed "educational advances." One of these was the providing of retirement facilities

⁵³D. D. Wallace, History of South Carolina, 111, 40.

⁵⁴B. M. Palmer, op. cit., pp. 281f.

for the professors, another was the erection of a chapel, the accoustics of which were so poor that it was rarely used. A third was a change in the commons system which had been the source of many student discipline problems. A fourth was the institution of written examinations. A fifth was the restoration to the graduation exercises of the custom of presenting prizes. A sixth was Thornwell's writing into the policy of the institution its classical character.⁵⁵

(4) A Theory of Higher Education. Thornwell held that general education was the purpose of a college, the improving of mental facilities and not the acquiring of knowledge per se.⁵⁶ This, as he recognized, involved a compulsory curriculum. It also necessitated independence of the faculty members, being responsible alone to the institution's administration for their conduct. The results of the type of liberal education which he viewed as ideal, he thought, were three: (a) a quickening of the powers of the mind; (b) the formation of such intellectual habits as would be conducive to clear thinking; and (c) the acquisition of fundamental knowledge upon which might rest any kind of professional training which the student might wish to consider as a post-graduate.⁵⁷

Such subjects as the natural sciences and the applied sciences he considered of minor importance in the effort to train the

⁵⁵E. L. Green, History of the University of South Carolina, pp. 56-60.

⁵⁶Quoted from the letter to Manning by B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 357.

⁵⁷Collected Writings, iv, 560.

capacities of the mind. In an ideal situation, these subjects and all professional training, he thought, should be relegated to post-graduate work in a school resembling a university.⁵⁸

In reviewing an Early History of the University of Virginia, in 1857, Thornwell stated concerning the university's curriculum arrangements, "There are features of the plan which we do not think adapted to the condition of the country, we fear too much is left to the discretion of the student."⁵⁹ In the fall of that year, the students at South Carolina College and four or five honorary members of the literary societies debated "on the advisability of turning the College into a University." It is not recorded that either Preston or Thornwell took part in the debate but they were symbolic of the two sides taken upon that subject.⁶⁰

(5) Church and State in Higher Education. The question whether denominations should officially establish and maintain colleges was a keenly debated one during Thornwell's lifetime. In 1829 there were forty-three colleges in the United States, fourteen of which were controlled by Presbyterians.⁶¹ By 1851 it was said

⁵⁸J. H. Thornwell, Letter to His Excellency Governor Manning on Public Instruction in South Carolina, p. 16. C. Meriwether, History of Higher Education in South Carolina, p. 169. B. W. Palmer, op. cit., p. 355. E. L. Green, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵⁹J. H. Thornwell, "Reviews," Southern Quarterly Review, 3d ser., vol. 11, no. 2 (February, 1857), pp. 470-471.

⁶⁰Charles H. Hutson, "The South Carolina College in the Late Fifties," Sewanee Review, vol. xviii (July, 1910), p. 333.

⁶¹E. Cornelius, ed., "Statistics of Colleges in the United States, obtained by special correspondence from authentic sources, April, 1829," Table I, Quarterly Register and Journal of the American Education Society, vol. 11, no. 7 (April, 1829), pp. 224-225.

that "two thirds of the colleges in the land were directly or indirectly under the control of the Presbyterian Church."⁶² The question was raised by T. S. Grimke in Charleston in 1830, "When shall liberal education in Christian countries mean Christian education?"⁶³ This inquiry was probably directed toward the deistically inclined Thomas Cooper, then president of South Carolina College. In 1845 the Old School Presbyterian Board of Education assumed responsibilities for the assistance and supervision of Presbyterian colleges.⁶⁴

To Thornwell is given the credit for the fact that there was no Presbyterian college in South Carolina until 1877, fifteen years after his death.⁶⁵ There were those in the State who were sympathetic to the cause of denominational education. Thomas Smyth, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Charleston, in 1845 delivered an address to Oglethorpe College in Georgia. In it he stated that, from the nature of the case, the state could never give a proper religious education and that in order to procure that for her children, the Church must provide it.⁶⁶

⁶²D. G. Tewksbury, The Founding of American Colleges and Universities prior to 1850, p. 92.

⁶³T. S. Grimke, . . . The Bible . A Textbook in Every Scheme of Education, Charleston, 1830, p. 76.

⁶⁴Presbyterian Reunion, A Memorial Volume, 1837-1871, p. 15.

⁶⁵D. D. Wallace, op. cit., iii, 38.

⁶⁶J. Wm. Flinn, ed., Complete Works of Rev. Thomas Smyth, D. D., v. 560, 562. Purity Presbyterian Church of Clinton, S. C., supported Oglethorpe College during the 1840's. F. D. Jones, Purity Presbyterian Church, p. 48.

Thornwell made clear that the spirituality of the Church made it necessary that the Church, as such, should not educate, save in her own peculiar sphere. Apart from that, however, Thornwell saw no way of operating church colleges save by separate sects. This involved, as he saw it, small college endowments, and a multiplicity of colleges beyond their usefulness. Because of the keenness of competition for patronage, this situation would eventuate in "the depression of the standards of general education so as to allure students to their halls; and next, the preference of what is ostentatious and attractive in education to what is solid and substantial."⁶⁷

For a state-supported institution, South Carolina College had a peculiarly religious character from the date of its founding. In 1807, the trustees determined that the students should be compelled to attend chapel services twice each week-day and once on Sunday.⁶⁸ Perhaps some of this feeling, as some interpreters seem to imply, and as the statistics seem to corroborate, was due to the predominance of the institution's Presbyterian patronage.⁶⁹ The odium which the institution's reputation acquired with the religious forces of the State through its connection with Thomas Cooper, it attempted to offset by establishing, in 1835, a chair of Christian apologetics.⁷⁰ It was this profes-

⁶⁷J. H. Thornwell, "Public Instruction in South Carolina" Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. vii, no. 3 (January, 1854), p. 432.

⁶⁸E. L. Green, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 44-45.

orship which Thornwell held from 1841 to his retirement in 1856. The credit for relieving Cooper of his educational responsibilities has been given to the Presbyterians of the State.⁷¹ They surely had some informal part in that action. By 1846, certain interested parties were anxious that Presbyterian domination in the college be relieved by the introduction of representatives of other denominations into the faculty.⁷²

Thornwell never felt that state support of higher education denied to it a religious content. He did have some difficulties in 1846, as he wrote Breckinridge, concerning the method by which religious instruction might be imparted.⁷³ But by 1853, he had determined that that instruction might come in the character of the professors, in the stated worship of the sanctuary and in scholarly vindication of "those immortal records which constitute the basis of our faith."⁷⁴ Those who deny the possibility of religious state-supported education, he then felt, "sooner or later, if their views prevail, . will separate the religious portion of our community from the rest, and then divided we shall become an easy prey."⁷⁵

⁷¹E. H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 11, 91.

⁷²The Academist (Lawrenceburg, Tenn.), vol. 1, no. 18 (March 18, 1846), p. 1.

⁷³B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 329.

⁷⁴J. H. Thornwell, "Public Instruction in South Carolina", Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. vii, no. 3 (January, 1854), p. 429.

⁷⁵J. H. Thornwell, "The Black Population," Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. 1, no. 3 (December, 1847), p. 108.

Thornwell's chief contribution to religion in higher education was his letter to Governor Manning termed by one writer as "the Bible of the college" used then and now "as the strongest bulwark against all attacks on state education."⁷⁶ The thesis of that work was that because of sectarianism in the Church, it is impossible to obtain either a satisfactory liberal or religious education under church auspices. The State, being able to incorporate into its teachings only what is common to all denominations, and being financially able to provide facilities for an accredited liberal education, is more likely to do the task desired. However, religion is a necessary element in education. And if the State fails to provide a satisfactory religious education in its colleges, the Church must take up the task rather than to allow her children to be "half-educated."⁷⁷

In the formation of the southern Presbyterian church, it was Thornwell who denied to its Committee on Education power of relating itself to educational institutions other than Sabbath-schools.⁷⁸ In 1861, when it was proposed that the Presbyterians of the South organize a university, Thornwell agreed to support the movement only after it had been understood that it was not to be made "a Church institution, organized and controlled by the Church, through her courts."⁷⁹

⁷⁶J. Meriwether, op. cit., p. 169. D.D. Wallace, op. cit., 111, 38

⁷⁷J. H. Thornwell, "Public Instruction in South Carolina," Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. vii, no. 3 (January, 1854), pp. 428-429.

⁷⁸Collected Writings, iv, 444.

⁷⁹B. M. Palmer, op. cit., p. 328.

A Select Bibliography

I. Primary Source Materials

1. Manuscripts

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II. Secondary Source Materials

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A Select Bibliography

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Note: The items listed below which are marked with an asterisk (*) are included in Thornwell's Collected Writings.

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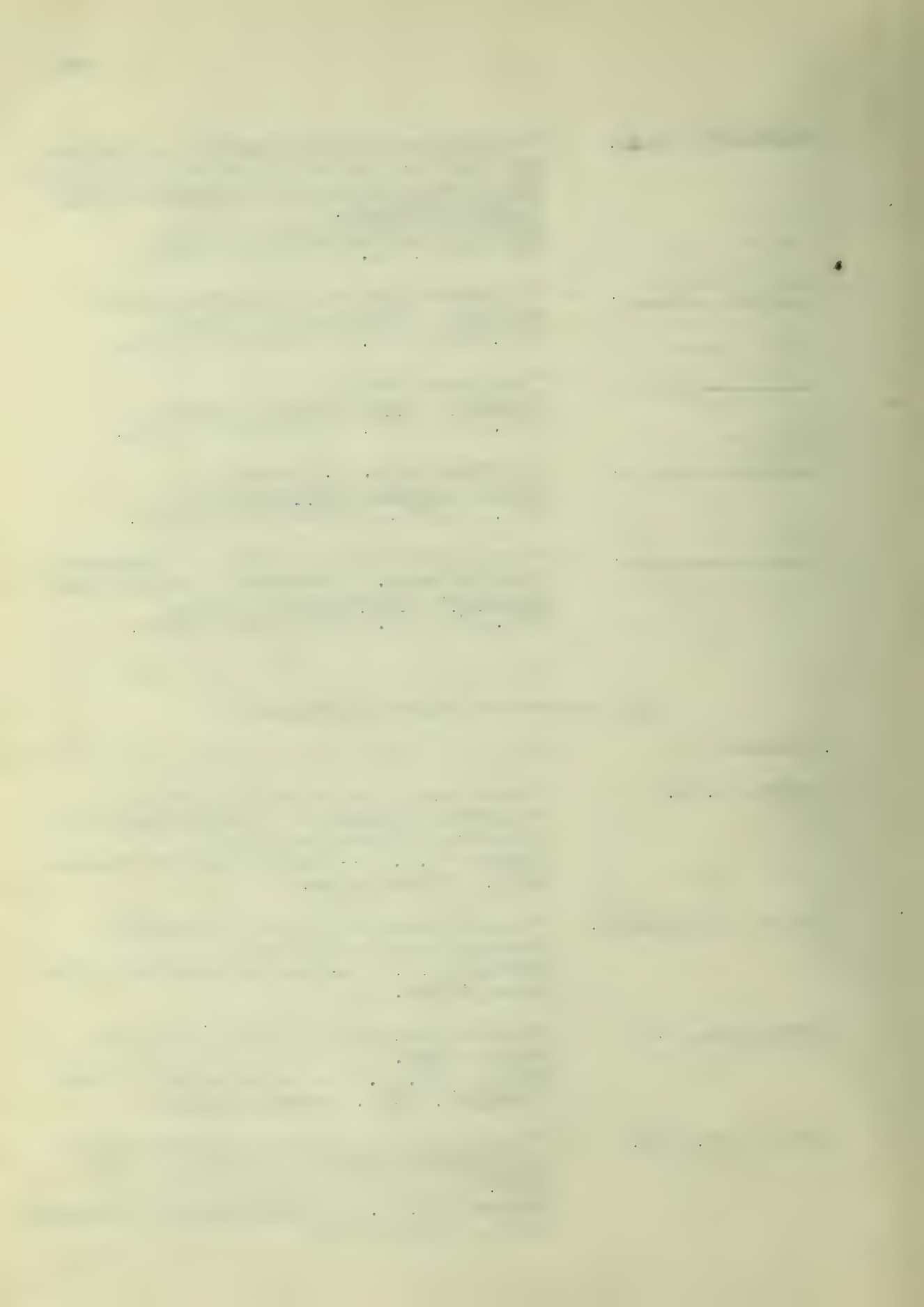
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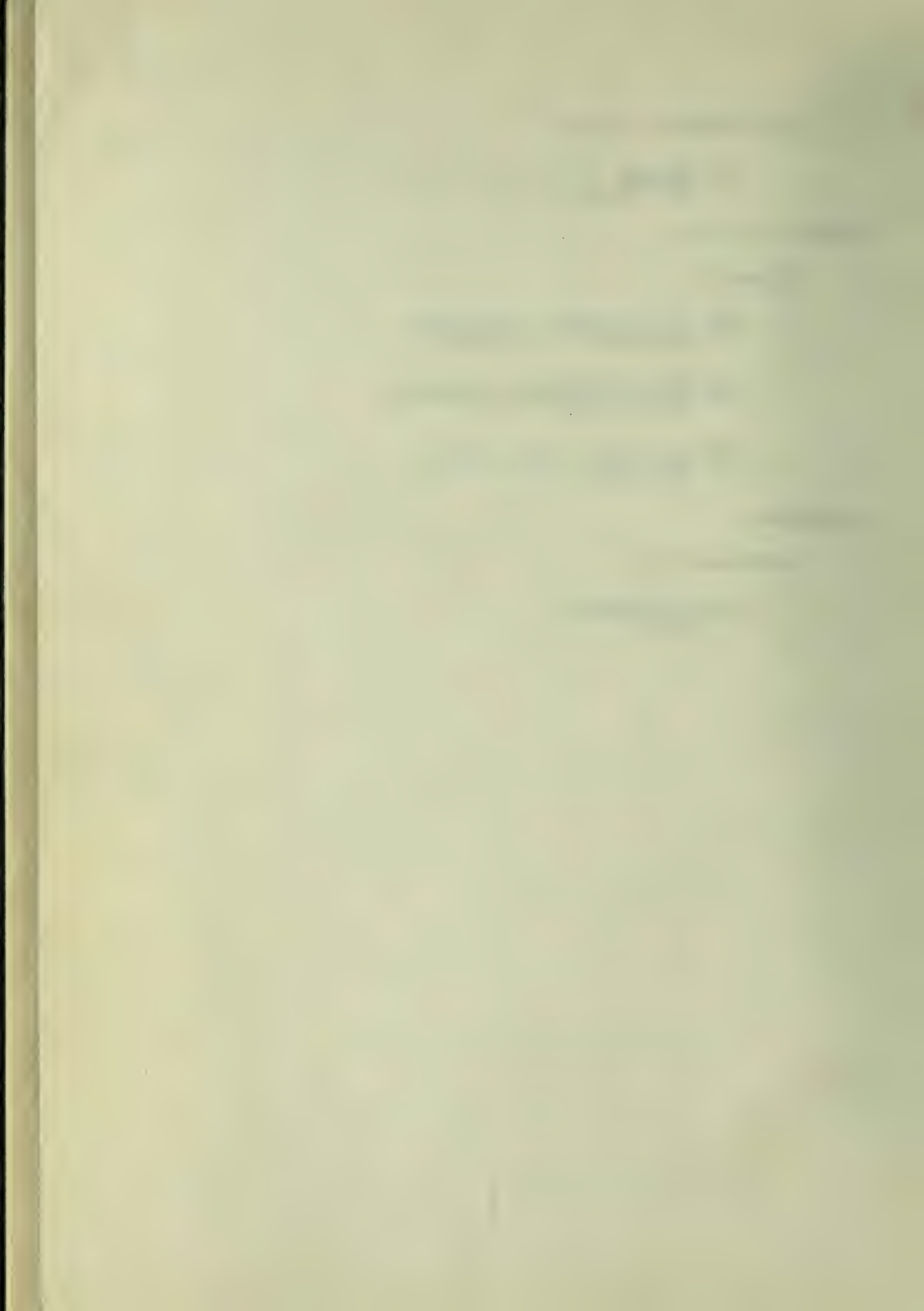
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A Brief Biographical Sketch
of the Author

A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Author

Paul Leslie Garber was born twenty-eight years ago today in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He received his preparation for college in the public schools of Ashland, Ohio, and in the Walnut Hills Classical High School of Cincinnati, Ohio. After one year at the University of Cincinnati, he enrolled in the College of Wooster, Ohio, where, in 1932, he received the A. B. degree.

From 1933 to 1936 he pursued studies at the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. In 1936, he was granted the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. During the scholastic year 1936-1937, he returned to this seminary as part-time instructor. While there, he followed a course of study which, in 1937, led to the degree of Master of Theology. From May, 1934, to July, 1937, he was student-pastor of two Presbyterian Churches in Bloomfield, Indiana. On June 6, 1937, he was ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America by the Presbytery of Cincinnati.

In May, 1937, he was appointed Gurney Harriss Keerns Fellow in American Religious Thought at Duke University. He was re-appointed to this fellowship for the year 1938-1939. During the summer of 1938 he served as assistant minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Durham, North Carolina.

F. L. G.

Duke University,

April 27, 1939.

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